SELECTIONS FROM WORDSWORTH

AN INTRODUCTION TO ROMANCE IN LITERATURE

ADAM FOX

Jo

G.K.A.B.

from A.T.

27. X. 1909

RIVERS' EDUCATIONAL WORKS

AN ELEMENTARY TEXT-BOOK OF TRIGONOMETRY

By R. W. K. EDWARDS, M.A., Mathematical Lecturer and Dean of the Evening Department at King's College, University of London. Crown 8vo. 5*s. net.*

This book is intended to provide a first year's course in Trigonometry for students who have acquired a knowledge of Geometry, including similar triangles, and the idea of angles between lines and planes, and of Algebra up to Quadratic Equations. Originally meant for candidates for the Intermediate Examinations for B.A. and B.Sc. students in the University of London, it should prove of use to all who have to acquire the elements of the subject for technical or other purposes.

PROBLEM PAPERS FOR UPPER MIDDLE FORMS

By H. LESLIE REED, Assistant Master Westminster School. Crown 8vo. 3*s.* 6*d. net.*

An excellent collection of short papers designed to meet the demand for constant revision in mathematical work. The problems are exceedingly varied, and are calculated to stimulate thought as well as providing practice in back work, and exercising the student in the application of Mathematics to questions of Physics and Chemistry.

RIVERS' EDUCATIONAL WORKS

A MODERN FRENCH READER

By A. D'ARDENNE DE TIZAC. Crown 8vo. 1*s. net.*

A collection of extracts from various writers, each of convenient length, and prefaced by the few words of explanation necessary to the understanding of the passage. The matter is designed to introduce the reader to some of the famous characters and episodes of French history, and especially to provide contact with the mind and life of present-day France.

A MODERN GERMAN READER

By J. A. JOERG, Head of the Modern Side, Dulwich College, and J. B. JOERG, B.A., Master of the Army Class and Senior Modern Language Master, Dulwich College. Crown 8vo. 1*s.* 6*d. net.*

Passages of convenient length in prose and verse, including extracts and essays describing the political and social institutions and conditions of modern Germany, setting forth the life and characteristics of its people, its industries and its commerce.

A PUBLIC SCHOOL CHEMISTRY FOR BEGINNERS

By E. C. LESTER, B.Sc., and B. TORDOFF, B.A., Senior and Assistant Science Masters at Eastbourne College. Crown 8vo. 3*s.* 6*d.*

The authors have produced a really practical book, omitting all matter likely to distract or confuse the beginner, and including, as an appendix to each chapter, a valuable collection of suggested experiments and questions by which the student may test his knowledge.

RIVERS' EDUCATIONAL WORKS

A GUIDE TO THE STUDY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
PART III. 1688–1901

By L. J. McNAIR, M.A., Assistant Master, St. Olave's Grammar School. Crown 8vo. 1*s. net.*

The intention of this book is to aid the student of English History by suggesting useful topics for study, by stimulating inquiry into important points connected with those topics, and by indicating where information may be found. It will be welcomed by all who have any experience of the fearful waste incident to the unintelligent reading of text-books.

SELECTIONS FROM ANSON'S VOYAGE ROUND THE WORLD 1740–1744

Selected and arranged with introduction, Track-chart and Portrait, by C. G. CASH, F.R.S.G.S., The Edinburgh Academy. Crown 8vo. 1*s.* 3*d. net.*

An important chapter in the history of our Sea Power. The hardships, dangers, and adventures of the "Centurion" and her consorts, with the capture of the great Manilla galleon, set forth in the simple contemporary narrative.

PLINY'S NATURAL HISTORY: SELECTIONS FROM BOOKS VIII.–X.

By L. D. WAINWRIGHT, M.A., Assistant Master at St. Paul's School. With introduction and notes. Crown 8vo. 2*s. net.*

An attractive selection which provides a welcome change from the ordinary matter of Middle Form Texts. Curious views on animals, true and untrue: interesting as showing what a highly educated and not unscientific Roman believed or thought probable.

SELECTIONS FROM WORDSWORTH

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/selectionsfromwo0000adam

SELECTIONS FROM WORDSWORTH

AN INTRODUCTION TO ROMANCE IN LITERATURE

BY

ADAM FOX

LONDON: ALSTON RIVERS, LIMITED
BROOKE STREET, HOLBORN BARS
1909

PRINTED BY
WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
LONDON AND BECCLES.

PREFACE

These selections are intended mainly for two classes of reader: first, those who are beginning to study poetry in general, and Wordsworth in particular; secondly, those who have already addressed themselves to Wordsworth's poems and have been unable to care for them. The Introduction has been written in the form of a continuous essay, which it is hoped may be found less tiresome than a series of notes; at the same time, it is so arranged that reference to any particular point may be easy, and that readers whose knowledge of English poetry is scanty may receive all the preliminary information necessary for its proper understanding. The list of poets which precedes it is important.

The Selections are arranged on a plan referred to in the concluding part of the Introduction. The poems in each section are arranged in groups according to their particular characteristics, but the sonnets are in alphabetical order, except the series of three on King's College Chapel, which are put together, taking their place from the opening line of the first one:

"Tax not the royal Saint with vain expense."

Considerations of space have made it necessary to give only a fragment of *Peter Bell*, and to detach two passages of *The Excursion* from their context; it was impossible to do otherwise. As it is, much has been omitted, which it was grievous to reject. At the same time, the Selection may be regarded as representative of Wordsworth in all his best moods.

The Notes are as brief as possible.

A. F.

LANCING, August, 1909.

CONTENTS

PAGE

List of Books ix

"But who is He, with modest looks" . . . xi

A Table of Dates xii

INTRODUCTION 1

Part I. Wordsworth's Views 4

„ II. Wordsworth's Predecessors . . . 23

„ III. Wordsworth's Poems 38

SELECTIONS FROM THE POEMS—

Part I. Shorter Poems of Lyrical Character . 55

„ II. Narrative Poems 84

„ III. Reflective Poems 159

„ IV. Odes and Sonnets 185

Notes 207

Index 213

A LIST OF BOOKS

THE following books (out of many) are useful to any student of Wordsworth :—

Complete Poetical Works. The Clarendon Press edition (3*s.* 6*d.*) is cheap and well printed, though the type is small. There is a useful chronological table. Macmillan's edition, edited by John Morley, is more expensive (7*s.* 6*d.*) ; the type is larger, and the Introduction, table of Contents, list of Editions, etc., are very good. Until the copyright expired, Moxon published constant reprints of the complete poems. The one-volume edition is a fine book, and a second-hand copy can generally be bought for about 4*s.* ; the purchaser should be careful, however, to see that he gets one which contains the *Prelude*, which was not published till 1851.

Wordsworth. Walter Raleigh. (Edward Arnold. 6*s.*)

Wordsworth (English Men of Letters). F. W. H. Myers. (Macmillan. 1*s.* 6*d.*) Both these books are somewhat philosophical.

Wordsworth's Literary Criticism. Nowell C. Smith. (H. Frowde. 2*s.* 6*d.*) A useful collection of prefaces, letters, etc., written by Wordsworth on the subject of poetry.

Coleridge's Biographia Literaria. A new edition in 2 vols., by J. Shawcross. (H. Frowde. 8*s.*) Invaluable as being the best criticism of Wordsworth's own time, and by one of his own friends.

Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes. E. de Sélincourt. (H. Frowde. 2*s.* 6*d.*) This is good reading, and gives another aspect of the poet.

But who is He, with modest looks,
And clad in homely russet brown?
He murmurs near the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own.

He is retired as noontide dew,
Or fountain in a noon-day grove;
And you must love him, ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love.

The outward shows of sky and earth,
Of hill and valley, he has viewed;
And impulses of deeper birth
Have come to him in solitude.

In common things that round us lie
Some random truths he can impart,—
The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.

From *A Poet's Epitaph.*

1799.

A TABLE OF DATES

Spenser	1553–1598–9
Shakspere	1564–1616
Milton	1608–1674
Dryden	1631–1700
Pope	1688–1744
Thomson	1700–1748
Gray	1716–1771
Cowper	1731–1800
Crabbe	1754–1832
Burns	1759–1796
Wordsworth	1770–1850
Scott	1771–1832
Coleridge	1772–1834
Southey	1774–1843
Byron	1788–1824
Shelley	1792–1822
Keats	1795–1821
Tennyson	1809–1892
M. Arnold	1822–1888

SELECTIONS FROM WORDSWORTH

INTRODUCTION

Men most easily communicate their thoughts to others by means of words, and words are indeed so important that what we call a liberal education is almost entirely concerned with their proper use; hence the love of poetry is usually regarded as the sign of an educated man, because poetry is the art which endeavours to extract from words their utmost sense. It employs them as mere sounds in the form of rhythm and rhyme; and by having regard to the subtle variations in the meanings which they severally convey, it seeks to represent the contents of an author's mind more accurately and more fully than other forms of composition. And if this mind be a fine one, the poetry will be good.

Such a mind was Wordsworth's; but fine as it was, the modes in which it found expression suffered from being unattractive at first sight. Even his personal appearance, to some extent an index of the mind, was only pleasing to his intimates, and his manner with strangers usually produced positive dislike. His works in a pre-eminent degree suffer from the same misfortune; whence it comes about that among those who read

poetry, he has very varying judgments passed upon him, for while some have learned to think him a most profound teacher, and find in him the source of real and highest pleasure, there are more still who have not been able to overcome a sense of the ludicrous or trivial which they experienced contrary to their expectation at the first reading of his works. Could they be induced, however, to read on or to re-read, he would probably gain in the end a larger circle of admirers than almost any other poet, since it was his aim, as we shall see, to appeal to men simply because they are men. This introduction tries, as far as its compass will allow, to supply the necessary inducement. Wordsworth said himself that those who came to his poetry with preconceived notions on the subject would be disappointed, and we do mostly come to it with such notions, derived by the majority in our day perhaps from Tennyson and Shakspere. What follows is intended to give some idea of the views which Wordsworth entertained about poetry both in theory and in practice, and to explain their importance by showing how they differ from or improve upon those of his predecessors and contemporaries.

The Selections from the poems have a twofold purpose : first, they are designed to illustrate the poetical principles discussed in the Introduction ; secondly, they will ensure the reader getting really the poet's best work. Far the greater part of this was written between 1798–1815, very little of it after 1820 ; but Wordsworth's output was steady and continuous for some fifty years, hence there is much in the Complete Works which increases their bulk rather than their value, and one who studies without guidance may light on what is inferior

and misjudge the poet accordingly. There is included in this small volume, perhaps a tenth of what is first-rate in Wordsworth's poetry ; if the reader does not like it, he is no Wordsworthian ; if he does, let him proceed to make his own anthology on a larger, and, if he wishes, a different plan, and it may be he will come in the end to read with enthusiasm every word the poet wrote.

I

WORDSWORTH'S VIEWS

Lyrical Ballads—Wordsworth's *Preface*—His Early Life—Character of the Preface—Its Abstract Tone—The Poet—Methods of Composition—Subject-Matter of Poetry—Aim of Poetry—Pleasure and Excitement—Poems with a Purpose—Humble and Rustic Life—Poetic Diction—The Permanent Parts of Language—Prose and Poetry—Metre—The Reader.

A BOOK of verses called *Lyrical Ballads with a few other Poems* appeared anonymously in 1798. The authors were really Wordsworth and S. T. Coleridge, and it was the outcome of a year's association in Somerset. Wordsworth and his sister had gone to Alfoxden in 1797 in order to be near Coleridge, who was with his wife at Nether Stowey close by, and the two men, sharing common views on poetry, resolved to put them into practice in a common venture. In the end, however, Coleridge's contribution was small, four poems to nineteen of Wordsworth's, though of the four *The Ancient Mariner* was one. The authors prefixed to their work a short preface, or, as they called it, an *Advertisement*, inviting the public to pass judgment on some experiments in a new style of poetry.

Although the book was severely criticised, it sold

moderately well, and in 1800 a second edition appeared in two volumes. The first of these contained the poems of the original issue ; * the second contained new poems all by Wordsworth ; on the title-page his name appears by itself, and the *Advertisement* has been expanded into a lengthy *Preface*, in which he fully discusses his own views ; Coleridge really passes out of sight.

The *Preface* of 1800 is very important ; Wordsworth had occasion, as time went on, to write much in prose about poetry and his own poems, but he never wrote anything more clearly or with more apparent conviction than this first declaration of his poetic beliefs, and in it we shall find the key to all that is original and permanent in his work. It will be worth our study.

It may make the task more profitable, however, if we first consider to what extent this young man was qualified to formulate views on so profound a subject as poetry. He was certainly no professed philosopher or man of learning. He had been born, the son of a solicitor, at Cockermouth, near the Lakes, in 1770, and after having been at school at Hawkshead close by Windermere, was sent up to St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1787, but at the University he appears to have done little, though he took his Bachelor's degree early in 1791. Money was then forthcoming, which enabled him to go to France ; here he was seized with enthusiasm for the Revolution, thought Reason was about to establish an ideal government, and was on the point of putting himself at the head of the Girondist party (though he could

* The alterations were numerous, but not important, except that Wordsworth's *The Convict* was omitted, and Coleridge's *Love* appeared instead.

barely talk French), when discreet guardians cut off his supplies and compelled him to return to England. This taste of the French Revolution was the only real event in Wordsworth's life; it and the society of his sister, who after his return was his constant companion, are probably the only influences apart from Nature which at all affected the trend of his genius. The history of these years and their effect on the poet's mind are finely told in his great autobiographical poem, *The Prelude*; as far as externals are concerned, he spent his time from 1792 onwards in different places with his sister, living frugally and uneventfully enough without bettering his prospects, and without being troubled, it seems, at their uncertainty. It was taking him all his time and all his philosophy to regain that optimist view of life and human nature which the failure of the Revolution had so severely shaken. Thanks to his sister's sympathy, however, and the new interests which the association with Coleridge had aroused, he regained his serenity at last.

Such was the author of the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, and the views expressed in it may, therefore, be reckoned as those of a man about thirty years of age, of middle class and meditative disposition; profoundly interested in mankind, though somewhat mistrustful of political institutions; not specially versed in any branch of knowledge, nor having betrayed any special aptitude for learning; not even widely read in the subject of which he wrote, but having some practical acquaintance with it; confident of his own abilities, but having so far persuaded only a few to share his opinion.

What are these views? It is not easy to sum them up; Wordsworth wrote poet's prose, full of striking

remarks, and vivid, sometimes impassioned paragraphs, but the continuous thread of argument is wanting; the different topics which the subject suggests are introduced apparently simply as they occur to the author while he writes; the result is a remarkable impression of spontaneity, but a failure to enforce any definite conclusions on the reader's mind. Now these are just the qualities one finds in Wordsworth's great poem, *The Excursion*, and are, indeed, to some extent what make it great, but in an essay, and that of a controversial character, clear arrangement is a necessity, and without it imagination and passion will miss their effect. The *Preface* has given rise to much dispute, because critics, having only a vague general impression of its contents, have seized on some particular sentence which struck them, and have argued as if it contained Wordsworth's view of poetry, when in reality it was only one opinion of many which go all together to compose his view. It will be necessary for us to know many of his opinions: the question is how they can best be presented to the reader so as to produce a clear impression; they must be set down in some logical order, and not a few of them need explanation too.

The essay is partly critical, but mainly creative; that is to say, it refers to poetry as it was being written at the end of the eighteenth century, and expresses the strongest disapproval of it; but here the pure criticism stops. When it proceeds to say what poetry should be, it neither goes back to the great masters of the past, nor points out in detail the beauties of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth adopted this course more or less in the *Preface and Supplementary Essay* to the 1815 edition of

his poems. But in 1800 he did something much more interesting, he wrote about poetry quite in the abstract; one might almost say that he seemed to ignore actual poetry altogether, and to write about its necessary conditions, just as a scientist can write about the qualities of an element, although it be as yet undiscovered. He said that a certain kind of man, namely a poet, having had certain kinds of experience, could write a certain kind of composition, namely poetry, which would have a certain effect, namely, that of pleasure, on certain other kinds of men, namely, those who were capable of appreciating poetry. Now this, as an account of his views, gives a minimum of information, but for that very reason it will serve well as a framework on which to arrange his own statements so as to display their connection. We must see what he said, first, about the poet, then about the necessary conditions of composition, then about the poem when completed, and its aim; finally, about the reader and the effect produced on him.

The Poet "is a man speaking to men," says the *Preface*, "a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them."

The first sentence here is sufficiently obvious, but it is none the less remarkable; here, however, it is not

necessary to do more than draw attention to it, for it hardly helps to define the poet : its import will be more clearly seen in connection with the subject-matter and diction of poetry. The remainder of the paragraph tells us how the poet is superior to other men, namely, in his interest in human nature. About nature as a whole, which we commonly suppose to be a poet's main topic, nothing is said here, not because Wordsworth was indifferent to natural objects, on the contrary, there was never a man so powerfully affected by them, but their interest for him arose from the manner in which he felt them stir "his own passions and volitions," and observed them stirring those of other people, and it is in this sense that the interest in human nature is the essential poetic faculty. But to the making of a poet (and not merely a poetic soul) two further qualities are needed : one the impulse to create the material of poetry where it is not encountered in reality, the other the power of imagination, that is, the power to reproduce states of thought and feeling when the circumstances which originally caused them are removed. The poet, then, is a creative and imaginative observer of human nature.

What does he do when he wants to write poetry? Now this is a topic on which one would not expect anything very definite. Shakspere has described to us the behaviour of the poet when he is in his "fine frenzy," but Vergil, to take a single instance, produced his poetry by a loving perseverance, which was the very opposite of frenzy. Indeed, one cannot enforce methods of composition on poets any more than methods of teaching on schoolmasters, or methods of strategy on generals. It is characteristic, then, of Wordsworth's self-centred mind

that he tells us precisely how successful composition generally begins, drawing on his own experience, no doubt, and presuming its general applicability to others. "Poetry," he says, "is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity; the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind." In this mood, it seems, the poet communicates his passions to his reader in the form of poetry, only taking care that "those passions, if his Reader's mind be sound and vigorous, should always be accompanied with an over-balance of pleasure." Whether this will be a long or a slow process we are not told; it must suffice to say that Wordsworth admits that "practice" has some influence on the use of poetic gifts, and in his own case the act of composition (he generally composed in the open air, walking about and reciting the new-made verses to himself) was one of extreme exertion, and often followed by a state of physical collapse lasting till the next day.

We come now to the completed poem, and it can be considered from several points of view. First, then, as to its subject-matter: What shall we expect a poem to be about? Wordsworth has much to say on this matter. "The objects of the Poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. . . . The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of

the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us." Again he says, "There is left open to me what confessedly constitutes the most valuable object of all writing, whether in prose or verse; the great and universal passions of men, the most general and interesting of their occupations, and the entire world of nature before me—to supply endless combinations of forms and imagery." This, it must be admitted, is a sufficiently wide field; a large mass of eighteenth-century poetry is excluded, it is true, as being concerned largely with manners and matters of only passing interest, but it includes much that poetry has never dealt with adequately—electricity, for instance, and fire-escapes, and submarines, and radium. But in selecting from this wide field the poet is limited by the object he has in view, and with this, perhaps the most important of our topics, we must deal before we can proceed further.

The object of poetry is to produce pleasure. This may seem a low view to take, seeing how exalted is the position of poet, and how much has been written in praise of poetry; but it is not really so. Wordsworth, at any rate, had no doubts upon the matter. "The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a Man." "Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure," he continues, "be considered as a degradation of the Poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgement of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgement the more sincere,

because not formal, but indirect; it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love; further, it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves."

The poet is almost turned philosopher when he writes like this, but his meaning is really clear; it might be degrading for the poet to produce pleasure, if by pleasure were meant the trivialities which people ordinarily call by that name. But real pleasure is something different; it is not to be got out of temporary excitements, like motoring or a music-hall, for instance, these are mere distractions; but it arises out of the more permanent influence which great events sometimes, great works of art more often, exert upon a man's life. Among such works of art great poems must rank high. Great events would no doubt be the most profound influence (such as the Battle of Marathon was to the poet Aeschylus, who took part in it), but they are not easily encountered; and poetry is the best substitute for them. He who reads Shakspere's *Henry V.*, for instance, knows something of the pleasure to be gained from having fought at Agincourt.

But what is the nature of this pleasure, whether it be felt in action or in art? It is a pleasure that follows on excitement. Wordsworth says so much in another part of the *Preface*. "The end of poetry is to produce excitement in co-existence with an overbalance of pleasure." But this needs a slight qualification. One does certainly recognize the best poetry, as one reads it, by the vivid sensations which it produces, but the excitement is not accompanied, but followed by the pleasure. Indeed, if one thinks of it, excitement is never pleasure

in itself, but the two are so often associated that they are liable to be confused. A lottery affords a clear and simple instance; there is pleasure in the anticipation of winning, pleasure too when you have won, the pleasure of relief even when you have lost; but the moments of excitement are those which precede the announcement of the result, and these are far from pleasurable. In the same way, coming to the effect of poetry, there is little pleasure, much pity and terror, aroused by a performance of *King Lear*, but it produces afterwards a state of calm recollection which is certainly pleasure, varying in intensity with the sensibility of the spectator. This pleasure is the reaction after the excitement; excitement always produces some reaction, but it is not necessarily pleasurable; drunkenness is notoriously disagreeable in its concluding stages, and fireworks are disappointing. But poetry aims at producing an excitement of which the reaction is pleasurable, though here again the excitement itself is not a pleasure; reading poetry is in the main hard work, unless the reaction is very rapid, in which case the pleasure is usually short-lived, as is the case with much bad poetry, and to some extent with that of Keats and Longfellow. The opposite is the case with Wordsworth: he aimed at producing the most lasting kind of pleasure from his poetry, and consequently a kind that is comparatively slow to assert itself. This is not due to any obscurity in his style, however, but to the fact that his poetry stimulates the great, slow-stirring, elemental passions, not the most violent; it touches

"The depth, and not the tumult, of the soul" (XXXI);

and this quality, Wordsworth thought, would appeal to

nobler spirits. "The human mind," he writes, "is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know, that one being is elevated above another in proportion as he possesses this capability."

When we come to consider what sort of themes they would be which neither grossly nor violently cause the excitement necessary for poetry to achieve its object of affording pleasure, we return once more to the question of subject-matter; but it will be convenient first to refer to one remark in the *Preface*, which tells us of a subsidiary object which Wordsworth's poetry at any rate has in view. Having spoken of "the triviality and meanness" of some contemporary poets, he says, "From such verses the Poems in these volumes will be found distinguished at least by one mark of difference, that each of them has a worthy *purpose*." One can see what is meant here by comparing Wordsworth's poem on the Skylark (V) with those written on the same subject by other poets—Shelley, for instance. And the result of writing with a purpose is that the poetry is "important in the multiplicity and quality of its moral relations." The pleasure which poetry should give is moral pleasure, and should arise from the heightened value given to what is morally good in human life. This is what we may conclude from the words of the *Preface*, but if the *Preface* had never been written, we should still draw the conclusion with equal certainty, for the poems themselves bear this great distinguishing mark upon them: the pleasure they afford is moral pleasure in a wide and noble sense.

We return to the subject-matter of poetry. The poet, we saw, has almost the whole world before him, but he must exercise discrimination in order that his poetry may result in pleasure to the reader. In a fine passage Wordsworth tells us where he had found his inspiration for the *Lyrical Ballads*, and by reading the passage we shall see clearly what canons of selection must guide a writer who would put into practice the Wordsworthian ideals.

"The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems, was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature; chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and consequently may be more accurately contemplated and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings, and, from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly, because in

that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. The language, too, of these men has been adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust), because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived ; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions."

This passage completes the account of Wordsworth's views on the subject-matter of poetry ; it needs no explanation, but it may not be amiss to point out that Wordsworth and his sister were just newly settled in the Lakes when these words were written, and the scenery and the people of that district must certainly have been in the poet's mind when he stated these four characteristics which he thought peculiar to "humble and rustic life." In this connection *The Guide to the Lakes* (1810), in prose, is very interesting, not only because it shows Wordsworth in a new light, but also because it contains, so to speak, the raw material in the way of observation and appreciation, out of which *The Excursion* and a great deal else was wrought. It, too, deals with "humble and rustic life," but from a topographical and political point of view.

One remark in the extract above touches on the matter of diction, to which we now pass. The men whom Wordsworth will introduce into his poetry "hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is derived." Now, it seems

that these objects are "the beautiful and permanent forms of nature," so that the best part of language will consist apparently of such words as river and brook and mountain and valley and sun and spring and summer and cloud and water. In what sense are these the *best* part of language? What is the standard of goodness? It is plain from what Wordsworth says that these words are good because they are permanent, like the objects they represent. This is true, but it is not the whole truth; the permanence of a word is not simply the same as that of its object. Of course, only permanent objects have permanent words to represent them. You cannot expect that the word "suffragette," for instance, would survive except as a curiosity if women received the franchise; but a permanent object may be represented by two words, one of which is permanent and the other not, and in this case the permanent word is presumably the better one. From this there follows a strong presumption that a word which has managed to remain permanently in use is a good word. A certain kind of locomotive, for example, may at times be called an "iron steed," but "engine" is the more common and more lasting term, and therefore more likely to be included in the best part of language. This is, indeed, the whole of Wordsworth's contention. People may invent all kinds of elegant synonyms and expressions in order to avoid being ordinary; but, after all, the ordinary words are those which have stood the test of use when men have tried to communicate their ideas to one another in speech or in writing, and are therefore probably most suited to that purpose. This is what we should call the survival of the fittest, but Wordsworth lived too early

to realize the full significance of that doctrine even in connection with the use of words.

If, then, the poet wishes to convey his ideas to others, his best plan is to use ordinary language. The poet is "a man speaking to men," and one is not surprised to find, therefore, that "the language of such poetry as is here recommended is, as far as possible, a selection of the language really spoken by men." Nay, more, "There neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition." This does not mean that poetry is the same as prose except for metre, but that the difference arises from the difference in the ideas expressed; that poetry depends neither on metre nor language is clearly shown by the fact that the language of the books Leviticus and Psalms are similar and both are written in prose, yet the Psalms are poetry of the first rank, and Leviticus is not poetry at all.

It might be urged, however, that if the poet has extraordinary ideas to communicate he will need extraordinary language to express himself; but language may be extraordinary without differing essentially from that of prose. It is unlikely that men will not have a common word to express the objects in which they are permanently interested, and if the poet deals with other objects than these he will not easily attain his end, that of giving pleasure. This is not in the least to say that poets are barred from using extraordinary words or expressions if need arises, but only from using them with such profusion as to create a distinct poetic diction. "Surely it is more probable," says the *Preface*, "that those passages, which with propriety abound with metaphors and figures,

will have their due effect if, upon other occasions where the passions are of a milder character, the style also be subdued and temperate."

It is easy to see how critics came to say that Wordsworth identified the language of poetry and the language of conversation ; indeed he did do so to some extent, for he was in revolt against "the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers," but it is necessary to remember as well that the identification was not a complete one. Poetry uses "a *selection* of the real language of men in *a state of vivid sensation*"; poetry uses "the language of prose *when it is well written*." Thus two objects are combined: "The Reader" is kept "in the company of flesh and blood," and at the same time the process of selection "made with true taste and feeling" forms "a distinction far greater than would at first be imagined, and will entirely separate the composition from the vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life."

"And if metre be superadded thereto," the *Preface* continues, "I believe that a dissimilitude will be produced altogether sufficient for the gratification of a rational mind." We pass to another and the final point. The use of metre does indeed seem to upset the whole theory : if the poet's great object is to communicate his thoughts to the reader, why does he burden himself with metre and rhyme, which will certainly prevent him from saying what he wishes in the most direct way ? Wordsworth defended himself very carefully on this point, and it will be sufficient to quote what he says. He starts from his assumption that excitement is necessarily the immediate effect of poetry. "But, by the supposition, excitement is an unusual and irregular state of the mind ;

ideas and feelings do not, in that state, succeed each other in accustomed order. If the words, however, by which this excitement is produced be in themselves powerful, or the images and feelings have an undue proportion of pain connected with them, there is some danger that the excitement may be carried beyond its proper bounds. Now the co-presence of something regular, something to which the mind has been accustomed in various moods and in a less excited state, cannot but have great efficacy in tempering and restraining the passion by an intertexture of ordinary feeling, and of feeling not strictly and necessarily connected with the passion." Again, "the music of harmonious metrical language, the sense of difficulty overcome, and the blind association of pleasure which has been previously received from works of rhyme or metre of the same or similar construction, an indistinct perception perpetually renewed of language closely resembling that of real life, and yet, in the circumstance of metre, differing from it so widely—all these imperceptibly make up a complex feeling of delight, which is of the most important use in tempering the painful feeling always found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions." Finally, appealing to experience, "Of two descriptions, either of passions, manners, or characters, each of them equally well executed, the one in prose and the other in verse, the verse will be read a hundred times where the prose is read once."

This is Wordsworth's explanation of metre as an element in poetry; it may or may not be the true explanation, it is at any rate perfectly plain; and it is perhaps worth noting that Shakspere, who distributes prose

and verse in his plays with consummate effect, seems to have been guided by some such principles.

Such is poetry, Wordsworth would have us believe, in its aim, its subject-matter, its diction and its metre. And who is going to read it? Everybody, is the hopeful reply, all rational intelligent men, whose minds are sound and vigorous; but none of them without an effort. The poet utters a warning: "An *accurate* taste in poetry, and in all the other arts, as Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed, is an *acquired* talent, which can only be produced by thought, and a long-continued intercourse with the best models of composition. This is mentioned, not with so ridiculous a purpose as to prevent the most inexperienced Reader from judging for himself (I have already said that I wish him to judge for himself), but merely to temper the rashness of decision, and to suggest, that, if Poetry be a subject on which much time has not been bestowed, the judgement may be erroneous; and that, in many cases, it necessarily will be so."

Poetry is indeed a high thing. Only once does the *Preface* rise to continuous eloquence, and then it is to say: "Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge: it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakspeare hath said of man, 'that he looks before and after.' He is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs: in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed; the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human

society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time."

With this our survey of Wordsworth shall conclude; it is necessary now to take a general view of English poetry before his time. For Wordsworth is no sudden appearance; he develops certain lines of thought that were striving to find expression throughout the eighteenth century. He ranged over the field of English literature, took of all that was best, and by the use of his own original talents brought it to an excellent work. The *Preface* deals with abstract principles, but it is based on concrete instances; it was not its author's guide to poetical composition, but an explanation of the poetry he had already composed after reading much that his predecessors had written, and forming his own opinion as to what was valuable in them and what was not. Some knowledge of the poetry of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is as necessary to a just appreciation of Wordsworth as some knowledge of English history is to a just appreciation of the political problems of our own day.

II

WORDSWORTH'S PREDECESSORS

Shakspere, Spenser and the Bible—Milton—Romance and Classicism —Dryden—Pope—Classicism and the Classics—Thomson—Gray—Cowper.

The English language, like the English people, owes much of its excellence to successive invasions. Englishmen of to-day have in them the blood of many nations and still retain the power, not so strong in other Europeans, of adopting the foreigner, and of falling under new influences without losing their own individuality; in the same way the English language, based on Anglo-Saxon and British monosyllables, has been successively strengthened from without by the admixture, first, of Norman-French under the rule of the Conqueror and his descendants; secondly, of Latin and, in a smaller degree, Greek, at the time of the Renaissance, when classical literature was reintroduced into England, France, and Germany, by the enterprise of Italian princes and scholars. Modern English starts when these novelties had ceased to be the property of the learned only, and were becoming essentially popular. The effect of this is seen in three very noble examples of literature, differing in form, but

similar in being all intended for the people at large. They are pretty well contemporaneous; the year 1600 is easy to remember; Spenser, the author of the *Faery Queene*, was then just dead, Shakspere's best plays were being written, the Authorized Version of the Bible was in contemplation, though not destined to appear for some eleven years. It is safe to say that since the time when these works became a part of English literature, no poet has attained any eminence amongst us who was unfamiliar with them. The *Faery Queene* is less widely read than the others, but Spenser has been called "the poets' poet," and his influence is apparent in all three centuries since he died; almost every great writer of verse has composed one of his best pieces in the Spenserian stanza, and many have consciously imitated his style. Of Shakspere and the Bible there can be no successful imitation in the same sense; their position must be reckoned by a different consideration, namely, that in them is to be found the origin of nearly all that is picturesque or vivid in our common talk, and they have thus served in large measure to give our language that natural fitness for poetical expression which it undoubtedly possesses.

Of all three works one can really say that they are "above criticism"; defects may be apparent in them, but it is somehow impossible to think of them as other than they are. They reflect the features of a glorious period; the barbarity of the Middle Ages had receded before the advance of the New Learning, but the old splendour and activity remained. Shakspere and Spenser were both men of affairs, and in the life of those times they must have seen much material for poetry, much

beauty and much passion, yet unrecorded ; they found, too, a spoken language of wonderful extent, the language of a spirited people lately enriched with the vocabulary of learning, and only waiting to take an artistic form for the purposes of literature. And so, although Spenser was conservative and almost antiquarian in the matter of diction, while Shakspere was quite the reverse, the result is the same in either case, a width of view and a copiousness of diction quite unparalleled in succeeding ages. And it was the same with the Translators ; they, too, were men of affairs, who saw that the Bible contained what the people of England were looking for, and they did their work with the stronger conviction because the Greek and Hebrew scriptures were not unworthily mirrored by the spoken language of their time.

To apply the ordinary terms of criticism to such men or to discuss their views of life and art is profitless ; one must simply bear in mind that their work has been read by every English author these three hundred years, and, as far as Shakspere and the Translators are concerned, what they have determined about the use of English is determined once and for all ; the language becomes more manageable for their genius, one has only to read medieval letters to see that, but it loses elasticity ; subsequent writers can only bend it stiffly in one direction or another, and while they may thus heighten some particular effect, they lose the wide range of effects which distinguishes the great Elizabethans.

With *Milton* (1608–1674) there is a tendency towards Classicism ; Shakspere wrote when the English language had been augmented (one might almost say inflated) to the greatest possible extent ; he is said to have a vocabulary

of sixteen thousand words, incomparably more than any other author, and many of them his own invention; but then his ideas also were incomparably grand and various; Milton is more limited in his themes, and must, therefore, make a choice of words, and his choice falls mainly on those of classic origin. In the form of his poems also he consciously imitates the ancient writers. *Comus* and *Samson Agonistes* are modelled on Greek Tragedy with their episodes and lyric choruses, their stichomuthia, and the small number of the speakers; the *Paradise Lost* takes the epic form of Vergil's *Æneid* and aims at the same effect as Latin hexameter writing by the use of blank verse artfully varied within certain fixed limits; there is a Vergilian tone, too, in the elaborate similes and allusions with which the poem abounds. But the spirit remains largely unclassical; there is in Milton a much wider sphere of appreciation than was possible for Greek or Roman, a continuous interest in all that affects human life, particularly in nature as the source of beauty, and, consequently, of pleasure to mankind; in *Comus* and the lesser poems this interest is specially plain, and it is not only wide but keen. When Milton sings the praises of country pleasures, he seems to have come straight from their enjoyment; when he speaks of flowers we feel that he has not long since plucked them in his garden. In *Lycidas* we read:

> "Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
> Of shades and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
> On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
> Throw hither all your quaint enamell'd eyes,
> That on the green turf suck the honied show'rs,
> And purple all the ground with vernal flow'rs.
> Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,

The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freakt with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose and the well-attired woodbine;
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears:
Bid Amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
To strew the laureat hearse where Lycid lies."

There is a grand aptness about this which makes it seem almost obvious; yet only a poet would notice, if it were not pointed out to him, that the violet does glow, and the pansy is "freakt with jet." It is this imaginative realism (if one may call it so) which brings Milton near to Shakspere; one misses it from subsequent poetry for quite a hundred years.

Milton is the natural successor of Shakspere; it was not possible that the poetical splendour which shone out in the time of Elizabeth should remain undiminished, and when it waned, the classical tendency was bound to show itself more and more clearly, as the moon does when the day begins to fade. But Milton has the daylight still; only after his setting there is moonlight and no dusk. The appearance of the Elizabethans was sudden: it was as though the creator of the world of poetry had said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. But as this epoch passes away, another is born in which two opposite tendencies are observed, Romanticism and Classicism, the sun and moon of poetry. It is afternoon with Milton, clear day still, but the moon is rising; with Dryden it is risen, and with Pope is at its height. Poetry is asleep: nothing but the regular beat of the heroic couplet shows that it still lives. But the night is short: in the year

Dryden died, Thomson was born; Gray came after him, and Cowper next. These had all their faces to the new day, and a little later Wordsworth and the other poets of the Romantic school saw the sun rise once more, the source of life in poetry.

Romantic is the word chosen in connection with the fine arts to describe what is opposed to the classical; thus, Gothic architecture is romantic, that of Sir Christopher Wren and his successors is classical. To define the romantic spirit would be a matter of the greatest difficulty, so many are the ways in which it manifests itself; but by experience people come to have what is called a feeling for the romantic. In general, the romantic tendency is that which leans towards nature and the life of nature; in extreme cases even towards savagery. The classical tendency, on the other hand, is towards the artificial, and especially towards civilization. Now the difference between civilization and savagery is obvious; in the one case you generally know what is going to happen, in the other case you don't. Civilized man has his breakfast at the same time every morning, for instance; the savage has his when he has caught it. On the same principle classical poetry avoids topics that will cause the reader any violent surprise, or bring him face to face with reality, and carefully regulates the metre and style for the same purpose; and when it really must be so coarse as to refer to anything that is not peculiar to civilization, but common to all human experience, it uses an elegant periphrasis. A woman, for example, is often called a nymph in classical poems. Romantic poetry, on the other hand, tries to get away from the peculiarities of any particular age, and to neutralize as far as possible the

effects of habit; it endeavours to see the excellence and wonder of common things, and thus to give interest to life when it has grown too regular to be exciting. A romantic poet would not call a woman a nymph, for instance, but he might think her an angel. One could say that classical poetry tries to disguise nature, but romantic poetry tries to appreciate it.

It must be clearly understood, however, that the contrast between the two tendencies is only clearly seen when each proceeds to its extreme point of development; in good poetry the two tendencies would be blended, and in the hand of a master poet, not only blended, but transmuted into something that is neither romantic nor classical. From the time of Milton onwards, however, either one or the other was in the ascendant, and we must trace their separate histories in English poetry.

Dryden (1631–1700) and *Pope* (1688–1744) elaborated the classical style towards which Milton had pointed the way, but in the true source of Milton's greatness they have no part. They are not really poets so much as rhetoricians; their aim is to produce pleasure not by stimulating men's feelings, but by conveying information in an acceptable form. Now the chief means which men have at their disposal for doing this are the set speech and ordinary conversation, and these, if they are treated poetically, take the form of didactic poetry and satire, which are the main products of the classic age. Dryden is a master of satire; he writes of the events of his own day—the war with the Dutch, and the Great Fire, for instance—in the *Annus Mirabilis;* the political intrigues under Charles II. in the *Absalom and Achitophel.* Except for rhyme and metre, these poems seldom rise above

the tone of prose, though it is prose made interesting by a strong personal touch, and vigorous because it imparts the results of a keen observation; poetry, in the sense in which the word is commonly used to-day, they certainly are not. Only the Odes, of which *Alexander's Feast* and the *Song for St. Cecilia's Day* are the best known, have something of a higher inspiration. His translation of Vergil is less hard and metallic than some of his writing, though it misses the spirit which in our day is thought to pervade the original. His philosophic poem, the *Religio Laici*, is not particularly successful.

Dryden's most important contribution to English literature lies perhaps in the facility which he acquired for giving plain and forcible expression to his ideas without sacrificing the regularity and correctness of his metre; his poetry is easier to read, and easier to understand than Milton, and if the ideas are not particularly beautiful, they have, at any rate, all the immediate interest of a well-written newspaper. Dryden was eminently popular in his own day, and was appointed Poet-Laureate.

Pope inherited from Dryden the heroic decasyllabic couplet, and confining himself almost entirely to that particular form, he brought it to a pitch of mechanical precision which could not be surpassed; he gained the same command over it that Ovid had over the elegiac couplet. There is less natural vigour about Pope than about Dryden, but there is more art. The seventeenth century had been remarkable for a continuous output of short lyrics; these little pieces, of which Jonson's *Drink to me only*, Herrick's *To Anthea*, and Waller's *Go, lovely Rose*, are well-known examples, though too slight to place their authors in the first rank of poets, were

nevertheless quite unsurpassed in their neat expression of light sentiment. Pope proceeded to put something of their grace and lightness into poems otherwise closely modelled on Dryden. His first success was a satire, the brilliant *Rape of the Lock*, but his fortune and his popularity were won by his translation of Homer. Later still, he wrote a philosophic poem, *The Essay on Man*. There is scarcely a flat line in all his writings, but there is scarcely a profound sentiment either. He is often witty, and sometimes melodious; he says in a few neat lines what it would take long to say in prose. But his appeal is always to reason or to prejudice, and not to the primary sources of man's pleasure; he is rarely a poet in our modern sense. The following is a well-known passage from *The Essay on Man*, and a favourable specimen of this style at its best :—

> "Behold the child, by Nature's kindly law,
> Pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw :
> Some livelier plaything gives his youth delight,
> A little louder, but as empty quite :
> Scarfs, garters, gold amuse his riper stage,
> And beads and prayer-books are the toys of age ;
> Pleased with this bauble still, as that before ;
> 'Till tired he sleeps, and life's poor play is o'er."
>
> Bk. II. l. 274.

It is useless to trace this kind of poetry in its further developments. Its self-imposed limits narrowed its possibilities, and Pope had exhausted them. His characteristic style found many imitators who lacked his skill; in their quest of novelty they went further and further from nature and natural speech, and landed themselves at last in a morass that quaked with false mythology

and unintelligible diction. Most of their poems are forgotten not unjustly; it was in them that Wordsworth found the "gaudy and inane phraseology" to which he so much objected.

It is remarkable that men should have been so blind to the various qualities of poetry as to be content with what Pope and the rest had to give them. Poetical satires and essays have their place in literature, but never can have a first place. Nor were Milton and Shakspere wholly forgotten; Pope and Johnson both published critical editions of Shakspere, not more to honour the poet than to please the public, and Garrick not infrequently appeared in Shaksperian *rôles*, which points to a considerable degree of popularity, though it is true the acting versions were somewhat garbled. But an author of the eighteenth century would no more have thought of going back to the antique style than he would have thought of erecting a Gothic cathedral; he was as pleased with his rhyming couplets as he was with the square houses and their square windows in Mayfair.

It is strange to think that views like these were largely valued because they were supposed to reflect the spirit of the classics. In reality they reflected just one aspect of ancient life—namely, an unbounded confidence in civilization and society. The Greeks and Romans regarded their citizenship as the source of all good, and those who did not enjoy its privileges were one and all barbarians. In the same way, the educated class in the time of Pope never doubted their own superiority to the rest of mankind and to the unenlightened past. It was, indeed, the air of superiority in Latin literature which specially aroused their sympathy; but to the element of romance

so plain in the *Odyssey* and in Aeschylus and in Vergil they were blind. The fact is they had a general idea but no accurate knowledge of the classics; otherwise Pope, whose attainments in Greek were extremely limited, could hardly have found such favour as a translator of Homer; he caught the spirit of the original about as much as St. Paul's caught the spirit of the Parthenon, and in either case the public was delighted.

But the return to Nature was bound to find its advocates. *Thomson* (1700–1748) was one of the pioneers. He is best known by *The Seasons*, a descriptive poem in blank verse, somewhat in the style of Vergil's *Georgics*. Dr. Johnson says the work was of "a new kind," but this is only true in part. Such poems had been written already, for the Georgics, because they are so perfect in form, were naturally a favourite model with the Classicists; but Thomson was better qualified than most of his contemporaries for a task of this kind. He had spent his youth in a Roxburgh village, and a large part of *The Seasons* is occupied with enthusiastic descriptions of natural objects true to their character, and the result, one feels, of the poet's own observation. In detail it is not by any means free from the faults of its age. "Night," for instance, is called "brown," and a bather is said "to taste the lucid coolness of the flood." Such conventional phrases, enemies to good sense, are frequent; but when the poet is sufficiently interested to abate the ornamentations, he writes accurately of what he knows familiarly, the countryside and country sports and pleasures. *The Castle of Indolence*, a work on which he spent much care, is less celebrated, but should be more so. It is a close imitation of the *Faery*

Queene in style, and hence has not the defects of *The Seasons*; in matter it is copious and fanciful, not unlike Keats' *St. Agnes' Eve*, but less decorated; its apparent simplicity is wonderful, considering it is the product of an age which was artificial to the last degree. And the simplicity is not solely due to art; there is a touch of Wordsworth in a simile which describes the young Knight of Arts and Industry—

> "So passed his youthly morning, void of care,
> Wild as the colts that through the commons run."
> Canto II. stanza 8.

Here is the true spirit of observation, the return to nature. If Thomson had been born with the Romantic poets, he would perhaps have been among their foremost.

Gray (1716–1771) probably influenced the Romantic movement more than Thomson, but in quite a different way. He was educated at Eton and Cambridge, and acquired a scholar's taste and habit of mind, especially a fastidiousness which made it almost impossible for him to write anything at all. His whole life was devoted to desultory study, and he was particularly learned in two matters, about which most people were totally ignorant: one, Gothic architecture, the other Scandinavian saga-literature. Although it is true he adapted a few ballads from the Scandinavian, these interests of his have not really much connection with his poetry, but they are noticeable, nevertheless, as early manifestations of the Romantic tendency. Gray knew the classics well, but they failed to satisfy him, and he turned to studies less formal and less hackneyed. It is a little disappointing to

find that his experience was not similar when he came to write poetry; here he remains a follower of classical ideals. Wordsworth says he "was at the head of those who by their reasonings have attempted to widen the space of separation betwixt Prose and Metrical composition, and was more than any other man curiously elaborate in the structure of his own poetic diction."

The condemnation is emphatic, and it is not unjust; and yet nearly all Gray's poems rank among the masterpieces of English literature. The *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard*, and half a dozen of the Odes are to be found in every collection. What is the explanation? It is that Gray had a romantic temperament which had been disciplined by long study of the ancients, and when he wrote, he wrote in the spirit of the classics, not of contemporary classicism. He is very comparable to Vergil, though no imitator; both were scholars and lived in seclusion, and both have in consequence a somewhat melancholy tone, a meditative air, as being spectators of life rather than actors in it; but their thoughts are deep and true within a certain range, and expressed in words which no art can better. In neither case is the language at all similar to that of ordinary usage, but then it is a certain aloofness which gives both poets their power. Wordsworth demanded ordinary language for poetry, but there are some effects that are worth attaining, yet cannot be attained under those conditions; and when he re-read his Vergil in middle age and wrote his *Laodamia* (XXXI), he realized this to the full. Nor can Gray be accused of altogether neglecting the romantic element in poetry; he was a fine critic, and could hardly have studied the classics without perceiving

that it has its place in all good literature, of whatever age. And, indeed, often and often it breaks out in his poetry as it never does in Dryden or Pope.

> "See the wretch that long has tost
> On the thorny bed of pain,
> At length repair his vigour lost
> And breathe and walk again :
> The meanest floweret of the vale,
> The simplest note that swells the gale,
> The common sun, the air, the skies,
> To him are opening Paradise."
> *Ode on the pleasure arising from Vicissitude.*

If Wordsworth objects to this, it must be from jealousy.

Cowper (1731–1800) was but fifteen years younger than Gray, yet when we come to him there is a very great change. He wrote his best poetry when he was past middle age, and his greatest work, *The Task*, belongs to 1785; Wordsworth may have read it when it first appeared. By this time the classical style was largely discredited, its worst adherents were at work; but the alternative had not clearly shown itself as yet, and there was a check to the progress of poetry. Cowper lived a quiet life in a pious family, apart from the activities of the day. His mind was a curious one, for he was subject to fits of lunacy, and at all times he suffered from melancholy. On one occasion he attempted to commit suicide twenty-one times in a day, but he retained sufficient presence of mind to count up the attempts. Only the society of a few select friends, mostly women, and the practice of religion made life bearable for him.

All these circumstances are reflected in *The Task*. It is written in blank verse, managed with considerable

skill, for Cowper was a great student of Milton, whom he claimed as his master. The topics of which it treats are those of elevated conversation, and they are introduced, in the manner of conversation, on no particular plan; the tone is definitely moral and religious, as it had not been in any secular poet since Milton; the language is plain and scarcely different from that of prose; in this respect Wordsworth never exemplified his own views better.

One thing is most noticeable about *The Task*. The reflections it contains may be divided into those which refer to the country and those which refer to the town. "God made the country and man made the town" is a famous line from the poem; it is the old contrast between Nature and Civilization, between the Romantic and the Classical. And it is wonderful to observe how successful Cowper is when he describes the country, how observant and how genuinely poetic, and, on the other hand, how mistaken and how gloomy he becomes when he treats of the town. He is pessimistic to the last degree about the state of society, and in all probability wholly misinformed. One feels that he introduces the thing only because his readers expect it; the old tradition is too strong for him. But when we return once more to the country, we get the real Cowper, and a real Romantic poet.

III

WORDSWORTH'S POEMS

Wordsworth, Cowper's Successor—His Creative Faculty—His Strict Views of his Art—Contrast with other Romantic Poets—Man—Nature—Human Life—How is Wordsworth romantic?—Shorter Poems—Narrative Poems—Reflective Poems—Odes and Sonnets—Conclusion.

It is easy to see, from the standpoint of the XXth century, that Wordsworth is, in a sense, the successor of Cowper, whose excellences he developed and freed from the encumbrances of the classic tradition, and that, so far, he is the natural product of the age in which he lived. But this is no detraction of his genius. If a man came forward to-day and pointed out to us what was good in the tendencies of the late XIXth century, and showed us how that goodness could be cultivated and the bad excluded so as to produce a new school of poetry of the highest rank, we should not dismiss him lightly; and this was the task that Wordsworth performed for his generation. He saw what qualities were shared in common by all good poetry, and he saw—no easier to discern—what faults were chiefly marring the poetry of his own day. Much of what he said in his Preface must have been at the back of all good poets' minds in every age. It was this extraordinary critical faculty, enabling him to

distinguish essential from accidental features, whether in poetry or nature, that partly accounted for his greatness.

But there is another aspect of his genius which more often escapes attention; this is its creative power. Although he had no care for aught but essentials, he had, in regard to what he cared about, a remarkable gift for detail. His observation of natural objects was minute and accurate, and in the same way his use of the subtlest effects in poetry was complete within his self-imposed limits. Wordsworth hardly realized this himself: he seemed to think that he had only to keep his principles in view, and poetry was bound to come. For the rest, all that he required was a process of "selection made with true taste and feeling," which was apparently easy enough. For Wordsworth, at any rate, it evidently was easy, and this is one of the chief manifestations of his genius. It is probable that he was so intimate and so much in sympathy with his themes that a flood of images and words to convey them rushed in upon him as soon as composition began, and from these, as it seemed, he had only to select what was best. But in such a case, if the best is even good, this can only be the result of a valuable creative faculty; and if it is superlatively good, then the faculty amounts to genius. In the lines—

> "Poor Matthew, all his frolics o'er,
> Is silent as a standing pool;" (XXI)

we have a simile selected with "true taste and feeling." But there is nothing wonderful in Wordsworth selecting it; his merit consists in having created it first. Similarly in the line—

> "Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears," (XXXVIII)

we have a complex of alliteration which only the highest art could create. But Wordsworth only felt that he was selecting this mode of expression as the best at his disposal; he did not realize, perhaps, that he was adapting sound to sense as subtly as ever poet did. These creative talents were unconscious—a part of the man's nature—and he underrated them accordingly.

But they are apparent in all his work. When he describes ordinary incidents—there is never much incident in his poems—he describes them in their most interesting aspect; though he uses the style of ordinary prose, he uses it with the greatest possible effect. It is obvious, indeed, that if nothing but adherence to principles was required for successful composition, we could all be Wordsworths; but more is required, namely, a creative faculty of the highest kind. This is proved by the comparative failure of poets who held similar views to those of Wordsworth, but had other talents. Crabbe wrote *The Parish Register* in 1807; but it is an indifferent performance. Even Tennyson, in his Wordsworthian poems, *Enoch Arden* and *Dora*, falls far short of his master. He reminds one a little of a confectioner making emeralds of angelica.

It is necessary to insist on this creative aspect of Wordsworth's art, because it is likely to be neglected. The poet had a serious, even austere, view of the effect which his work ought to make upon his readers; and he bound himself by certain laws for the purpose of producing the highest and most permanent pleasure that a poet may legitimately seek to produce. The result is some appearance of limitation, of inability to go beyond a particular sphere of observation and moral reflection. But this is

only on the surface. If we look deeper we shall find that there is an appeal in Wordsworth's poetry to all the genuine sources of pleasure in human life; and more than this, that there is a wonderful exuberance of fancy and imagination. But this is rarely allowed to flow free, for the poet's self-imposed law keeps all else subservient. Occasionally, however, he may give some particular talent its full scope, as he does in a passage of great majesty which concludes the Second Book of the *Excursion* (XXII). Here once more we find a high imaginative realism.

It is the combination of romantic fertility with strict obedience to law that chiefly distinguishes Wordsworth from the other Romantic poets—Keats and Shelley and Byron. He is the only one of them who took his place in society as a normal English citizen; he is the only one who formulated any definite theory of poetry; he is the only one who gave his poetry a distinctly moral atmosphere. In all this the influence of law is visible. And yet he loves the beautiful no less than Keats, is in sympathy with nature as much as Shelley, a delineator of human life and love as Byron was. But he will not let one of the qualities of poetry dominate the rest. Keats appeals to the senses mainly, Shelley to the imagination, Byron to the passions. Wordsworth gains his effect by giving all their just place. Matthew Arnold's criticism of Sophocles may be applied to him; he "saw life steadily and saw it whole," and because he did so, no particular aspect of it or of his art is specially obtruded in his works. If it were not for Wordsworth we should be almost entitled to conclude, about Romantic poetry, that its authors are necessarily eccentric and generally

addicted to vice, that its spirit is essentially pagan, and that it is unconnected with the conduct or criticism of real life. But from Wordsworth we know that none of these things need be so, nor ought to be.

Looking back on the history of poetry, one might even hazard the suggestion that the romantic tendency pushed to extremes, may seem, in a century or two, as meaningless and affected as the advanced classicism ; and although Shelley and the rest have written verses that are surely unforgetable, they will perhaps be remembered by fewer lines than the present estimate of them would lead us to suppose, for they appeal in much of their work each to some particular part of man's spirit, not to the whole ; and they are therefore liable to suffer by a change of taste. Wordsworth is not exposed to the same danger : not all his work, but still a very considerable quantity, must be of value to rational men, whatever the tastes and tendencies of their own age. Wordsworth is not primarily a poet speaking to those who can appreciate him, but a man speaking to men. Of his contemporaries, perhaps Burns alone can claim to occupy a similar place.

Wordsworth tells us in the *Recluse* what were the topics of his poetry—

> " On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,
> Musing in solitude I oft perceive
> Fair trains of imagery before me rise,
> Accompanied by feelings of delight
> Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed ;
> And I am conscious of affecting thoughts
> And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes
> Or elevates the Mind, intent to weigh
> The good and evil of our mortal state." (XXXVI)

Each of these three subjects of his meditation—Man,

Nature, and Human Life—has given rise to some special characteristic of his verse. The men and women whom Wordsworth describes are of a particular type; he is more interested in their state of mind than their appearance, but they stand out nevertheless clear images of poor people, uneducated and mostly old, but of a rugged independence which has transferred itself to their faces. Good or bad, they all bear the stamp of reality. Wordsworth studied humanity amongst the inhabitants of the Lake District, but the type is to be met with still in every part, often by the roadside or in remote villages, where men are still, for most of their lives, very near to Nature. There is no mistaking them. "A truly Wordsworthian figure," one would say as one met them; and it is probably the best description. Of such in Wordsworth's poems the Leech-gatherer (XXVII) is perhaps the plainest example. Peter Bell (XXVI) is another, and Michael (XXIX), and all those who take part in the colloquies of *The Excursion*. Susan Gale and Betty Foy (XXV) and Michael's wife are among the women.

In his treatment of Nature, Wordsworth is supreme. To start with, he is a keen observer, though not, it is true, in a scientific way like Shelley; still he has his eyes open to the ways of beast and bird, and the characteristics of different flowers, and seems to have formed the habit of noticing carefully the various details of scenery. In the second place, he is capable of deriving an intense, almost physical, pleasure from the mere perception of natural objects; this is plain in one of his best-known poems, "I wandered lonely as a cloud" (II), which has for its subject the experience of such a feeling on seeing

some daffodils. But the great feature in Wordsworth's attitude towards Nature is his belief in its moral influence, that is to say, in its influence on character. We all share in this belief more or less: thus we feel that some types of landscape are depressing, others exhilarating, and that things have a more hopeful aspect on a fine day than on a wet one. But on the whole, probably most of us would say that the effect of such things on our character is not so great as that which may be wrought by a commanding personality; it is men, we think, who wield the great moral influences. Wordsworth was of quite another opinion; his sympathy with men was often incomplete, with Nature it was perfect. He learnt that—

> "Nature never did betray
> The heart that loved her." (XXXVII)

And he came to see in her not a mere process or machine, but a great personal force living its own life of sense and feeling, and influencing men's lives, as any great individual may influence another.

This human aspect of Nature, if we may call it so, is apparent to Wordsworth wherever he turns, and is reflected almost wherever we like to look in his poems. Thus—

> "'tis my faith that every flower
> Enjoys the air it breathes." (XIX)

And again—

> "There is a blessing in the air
> Which seems a sense of joy to yield,
> To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
> And grass in the green field." (XX)

This is the life of Nature, and here is the influence of such a life.

> "One impulse from a vernal wood
> May teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good,
> Than all the sages can." (XVIII)

Or there is even a physical effect.

> "The stars of midnight shall be dear
> To her: and she shall lean her ear
> In many a secret place
> Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
> And beauty born of murmuring sound
> Shall pass into her face." (X)

Such passages abound in the poems; and elsewhere we find the same ideas expressed in a more definitely reflective or philosophic spirit. *The Prelude*, dealing as it does with the development of the poet's mind, is naturally full of them; but they find their highest expression in the great "*Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey*" (XXXVII).

This attitude towards Nature must necessarily affect Wordsworth's views on Human Life, the third of his great topics. If Nature can so elevate and purify men's characters, then life should be very splendid, and so it is for him. He is an upholder of the view which asserts that in their natural environment natural instincts under the guidance of Providence turn towards good rather than evil; he is, in fact, an optimist philosopher. He is also a humanist, that is to say, he regards man as the really important thing, and is chiefly interested in the processes of Nature for the effect they have on the mind and spirit

of men. But he finds place for the Christian interpretation of life too. Man is not the outcome of Nature, nor solely influenced by the natural ; there is a direction of the universe from without, and Christianity, which faithfully represents the supernatural character of this direction, satisfies a common instinct in mankind, and is, therefore, an instrument for good. The whole matter is summed up in a few lines from *The Excursion*—

> "One adequate support
> For the calamities of mortal life
> Exists—one only ; an assured belief
> That the procession of our fate, howe'er
> Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
> Of infinite benevolence and power ;
> Whose everlasting purposes embrace.
> All accidents, converting them to good."
>
> *The Excursion*, Book IV. ll. 10–17.

As we read these lines we recollect that we are dealing primarily with a poet, and not a philosopher. We may extract a systematic explanation of human life from Wordsworth's poems ; but he never drew one up ; indeed, he definitely disowned the attempt to do so in his Preface to *The Excursion*. "It is not the author's intention," he says, "formally to announce a system : it was more animating to him to proceed in a different course ; and if he shall succeed in conveying to the mind clear thoughts, lively images, and strong feelings, the Reader will have no difficulty in extracting the system for himself."

Here is a warning to the critic : let him expatiate at length on Wordsworth's view of life and so forth, but whatever he says, the reader can easily find it out for himself, and may prefer to do so. The object of criticism,

after all, is to help people to read with pleasure, not to bind them to any particular views about their author. Enough has been said if two purposes are accomplished : first, if the reader has been persuaded that it will be worth while to persevere, should he find Wordsworth's poetry at the start wanting in pre-eminent poetic gifts, since it may be that all poetic gifts are there but so duly disposed and harmonized that no one is specially apparent; and secondly, if some indications have been thrown out that may serve, as it were, for guide-posts, pointing the way to regions of most pleasurable discovery.

One more question remains. How is Wordsworth romantic? There is no answer but this—in some way as indefinable as Romance itself. Still, here again, one may put out some suggestions which will enable the reader to answer the question for himself. But to make such suggestions plainer, it will be well at this point to adopt some classification of the poems, for naturally each element of romance is most easily perceived in one particular type of poem favourable to its full development. Wordsworth was at great pains, when a collected edition of his poems was published in 1815, to devise a suitable classification for himself; but he based it on three totally different considerations—motive, form, and subject-matter—and the result was never satisfactory; many poems had to be put in one class or another quite arbitrarily. Matthew Arnold suggested that the best classification after all was that of the Greeks : epic, dramatic, and lyric; but here the distinctions are too broad to be very profitable. For the purpose we have in view, that of observing some particular romantic elements in Wordsworth's

poems, the following classification, unscientific though it be, will serve us well. First, poems whose interest depends on a single idea or incident; secondly, narrative poems, that is, those which are concerned with a succession of incidents; thirdly, reflective poems, that is, those which are concerned with a succession of ideas; and fourthly, the odes and sonnets. These last must form a separate class, because, although they might well be placed in one or other of the first three, they have a certain additional quality peculiar to themselves. To each of these classes a particular element of romance attaches itself.

Wordsworth is perhaps best known to the general public by his shorter poems, and yet these least betray his pre-eminent poetic gifts. For lyric poetry makes its greatest effect when it seems to come straight from the heart, full and unrestrained, the result not of artistic intention but of irresistible impulse. Such an effect some of Wordsworth's lyrics do make, but with the majority it is otherwise; so many are written from motive and not from inspiration. In the matter of diction, too, the neglect of ordinary usage is particularly apparent in this kind of poetry, because many words admissible in drama or epic have been strictly avoided by the English lyricists; when Wordsworth speaks of some young girl in such lines as—

> "And now I see with eye serene
> The very pulse of the machine,"

he seems to strike the wrong note.

There is, however, a certain class of small poems, in which Wordsworth's lyric fancies found expression in the

same blank verse that characterizes his reflective poems. Here the incongruity of thought and language is not observed, and the result is something quite unique. If lyrical poetry is so called because of its connection with music, then we may say that these poems (XIII, XVI, and others) have the place among lyrics that recitative has in opera or anthem.

In any case, all his best lyrics have this one great quality that belongs to romantic poetry: they deal with some quite ordinary experience, and they invest it, as it were, with

> "The light that never was on sea or land." (XXXIII)

For just a moment the poet, and through him the reader, ceases to be "moving about in worlds not realized" (XXXVIII), and discovers that in the common things of life, if he looks with seeing eyes, there is great store of new experience and wonder to satisfy his aspiration. It is, indeed, the capacity for wonder that we chiefly lose by being civilized, and that is perhaps why we go abroad so much; for in foreign countries the ordinary things are wonderful. A windmill, for instance, or a railway carriage, or a milkman, or a mule, not necessarily beautiful in themselves, and earning at best a languid glance from the native, will excite raptures in the foreigner. Still travelling palls and so does novelty, and one grows accustomed to new conditions all too soon; but from these shorter poems of Wordsworth, slight as some of them are and almost grotesque, one gets the same heightened feeling, and it lasts.

Wordsworth's narrative poems are of two kinds; one kind, of which *Peter Bell* and *The Idiot Boy* are

the best examples, relies on rapidity of action for its effect, and the lyric touch is never long absent from it; the other kind is less rapid in its action, but greater in point of sublimity; *Michael* is such a poem, and *The Brothers* too. In either kind the main interest is in the story itself, not in its ornamentation; but this interest, as Wordsworth intended, arises out of the passions delineated, not out of the incidents, and it is because we hear described men of like passions with ourselves that we are content that their experiences should be such as might come the way of ordinary people.

Amid simple and impressive surroundings (the influence of the Lakes is everywhere most plain to see), men are portrayed whose manner of life and outlook on it bring them face to face with the real issues. Without sacrificing truth or vividness Wordsworth seems to rid himself of all trivialities and accidental circumstances, so that his narrative becomes largely independent of particular time and place, and is typical of much more than what it actually describes. Michael, who sees his property and his son go after each other to rack and ruin, must have had his prototype in earliest human history; the sailor, who comes home to find all changed and his much-loved brother dead, has many companions in misfortune in this and every age. This is one of the strongest qualities of genuine Romanticism: it concerns itself with what is elemental in human nature. And though elemental human nature has too often been represented as endued with heightened passions and diminished moral sense, a saner view gives both an equal place in every age, but makes both clearer and less subtle in a primitive people.

Herein lies the strength of the appeal which these peasant-poems make.

It is not unprofitable in this connection to consider the poetical narratives which the Hebrews treasured up and collected in Genesis and other books of the Old Testament. Nowhere are moral problems more plainly presented, nowhere are there better or clearer types of human character. As we picture Jacob leading his household and his flocks—the fortune he has made in a far land—southward from Haran into Canaan, wondering as he camps each night how he is to face the meeting with Esau, the brother he has used so deceitfully, we realize suddenly that the romance of his life is the romance of thousands in other centuries and our own, whose lives may be we thought only sordid and commonplace till the Hebrew chronicler and his English translators put them in a new light for us. Wordsworth has something of the same gift, and his narrative poetry can hardly be better estimated than by comparison with that other which it so curiously resembles, despite the difference between East and West, and the great gulf between our times and those.

The general spirit of Wordsworth's reflective poems—their optimism and confidence in nature—has already been touched upon ; it remains to point out an essentially romantic feature in them. This is the clear rejection of reason as capable by itself of explaining human life. The XVIIIth century had been conspicuous for a growing confidence in reason rather than in tradition or instinct as the only sure guide, and the application of this view on a large scale had culminated in the French Revolution. Wordsworth had perhaps seen the falseness

of the suppositions on which it rested; at any rate he, above all men, has emphasized the importance of feeling and sympathy as the means by which we

"See into the life of things." (XXXVII)

It is not that he despises reason, but he thinks it only one of several channels through which true knowledge comes to us. A large part of life, and perhaps all its most romantic interests—warfare, for instance, and love, and adventure for its own sake,—have no purely logical justification, and yet they are as surely right for man as anything in the whole moral sphere; and we know they are right not by reason but by instinct. It is the same in less striking matters too, and Wordsworth has gone far in interpreting such feelings and insight as most of us have, and showing how in them he found, and enables us to find, the explanation of much in human life that seems not altogether reasonable.

We come last to the Odes and Sonnets, and there is only one thing more out of many to notice. The spirit of romance conceals itself for the most part in the ordinary affairs of life. But, nevertheless, it may at times put on a grandeur of its own, and become something akin to pageantry. In this particular class of poems we chiefly notice it. The sentiment here is no deeper, perhaps not so deep, as in some other work; but it is expressed in a fine rhetoric which gives it a quality of its own. Here and there we find some quite unforgetable line that rings in the ear, and seems, if one may say so, to come from afar.

"Armoury of the invincible Knights of old" (XLVIII)

is such a line ; and

"Of the old Sea some reverential fear" (LVI) ;

and

"Or the unimaginable touch of Time" (XLIII) ;

and

"Hear the mighty waters rolling evermore" (XXXVIII) ;

Amidst the quiet dignity of the rest such lines appear like princes walking among their subjects ; there is about them something of the spirit, but perhaps more of the glamour of romance.

Our enquiry shall here conclude. The more one ponders on Romance, the more intangible it seems and many-sided ; it is to be found mainly in what is simple, yet it must necessarily be strange and wonderful ; genuine romance may attach itself to two village lovers or a village child, yet romance, too, is the halo that surrounds great princes and their history ; to dwell in a great house and govern well is to live romantically, so also is to herd in a cave and beat off wolves and jackals all night long. No man may say what this spirit is that moves over the face of human life : only it is something that wields a mirror of perfection, which reflects the best that Nature has to offer, and shows us how we may enjoy that best. It will not see anything under a single aspect, nor put it to a single use ; it has regard to all its aspects, and puts it to every use it can ; it wages fierce war with that narrow division of interests and achievement that maim our civilization, and make us all pieces of a great machine that will not work.

And, in particular, as it manifests itself in poetry, it

shows that form is not anything in itself, nor motive, nor subject-matter, nor splendour, nor grace, nor a tripping sound; but all have their due place and proper relation, and it is the poet's part to realize how all may best be employed to the perfecting of his art.

It is enough if these pages shall enable some reader to find in Wordsworth an interpreter and guide who will set him on the road to the kingdom of Romance.

SELECTIONS FROM THE POEMS

PART I

SHORTER POEMS OF LYRICAL CHARACTER

I

TO THE DAISY

With little here to do or see
Of things that in the great world be,
Daisy! again I talk to thee,
For thou art worthy,
Thou unassuming Common-place
Of Nature, with that homely face,
And yet with something of a grace,
Which Love makes for thee!

Oft on the dappled turf at ease
I sit, and play with similies,
Loose types of things through all degrees,
Thoughts of thy raising:
And many a fond and idle name
I give to thee, for praise or blame,
As is the humour of the game,
While I am gazing.

A nun demure of lowly port ;
Or sprightly maiden, of Love's court,
In thy simplicity the sport
Of all temptations ;
A queen in crown of rubies drest ;
A starveling in a scanty vest ;
Are all, as seems to suit thee best,
Thy appellations.

A little cyclops, with one eye
Staring to threaten and defy,
That thought comes next—and instantly
The freak is over,
The shape will vanish—and behold
A silver shield with boss of gold,
That spreads itself, some faery bold
In fight to cover !

I see thee glittering from afar—
And then thou art a pretty star ;
Not quite so fair as many are
In heaven above thee !
Yet like a star, with glittering crest,
Self-poised in air thou seem'st to rest ;—
May peace come never to his nest,
Who shall reprove thee !

Bright *Flower !* for by that name at last,
When all my reveries are past,
I call thee, and to that cleave fast,
Sweet silent creature !

That breath'st with me in sun and air,
Do thou, as thou art wont, repair
My heart with gladness, and a share
Of thy meek nature!

1802.

II

I WANDERED lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,

They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude ;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

1804.

III

THE SMALL CELANDINE

THERE is a Flower, the lesser Celandine,
That shrinks, like many more, from cold and rain ;
And, the first moment that the sun may shine,
Bright as the sun himself, 'tis out again !

When hailstones have been falling, swarm on swarm,
Or blasts the green field and the trees distrest,
Oft have I seen it muffled up from harm,
In close self-shelter, like a Thing at rest.

But lately, one rough day, this Flower I passed
And recognised it, though an altered form,
Now standing forth an offering to the blast,
And buffeted at will by rain and storm.

I stopped, and said with inly-muttered voice,
" It doth not love the shower, nor seek the cold :
This neither is its courage nor its choice,
But its necessity in being old.

The sunshine may not cheer it, nor the dew ;
It cannot help itself in its decay ;
Stiff in its members, withered, changed of hue."
And, in my spleen, I smiled that it was grey.

To be a Prodigal's Favourite—then, worse truth,
A Miser's Pensioner—behold our lot!
O Man, that from thy fair and shining youth
Age might but take the things Youth needed not!

1804.

IV

TO THE CUCKOO

O BLITHE New-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?

While I am lying on the grass
Thy twofold shout I hear,
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off, and near.

Though babbling only to the Vale,
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery;

The same whom in my school-boy days
I listened to; that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green;
And thou wert still a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen.

And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

O blessed Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial faery place;
That is fit home for Thee!

1804.

V

TO A SKY-LARK

Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!
Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound?
Or, while the wings aspire, are heart and eye
Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground?
Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,
Those quivering wings composed, that music still!

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;
A privacy of glorious light is thine;
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of harmony, with instinct more divine;
Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!

1825.

VI

WATER-FOWL

"Let me be allowed the aid of verse to describe the evolutions which these visitants sometimes perform, on a fine day towards the close of winter."—*Extract from the Author's Book on the Lakes.*

MARK how the feathered tenants of the flood,
With grace of motion that might scarcely seem
Inferior to angelical, prolong
Their curious pastime! shaping in mid air
(And sometimes with ambitious wing that soars
High as the level of the mountain-tops)
A circuit ampler than the lake beneath—
Their own domain; but ever, while intent
On tracing and retracing that large round,
Their jubilant activity evolves
Hundreds of curves and circlets, to and fro,
Upward and downward, progress intricate
Yet unperplexed, as if one spirit swayed
Their indefatigable flight. 'Tis done—
Ten times, or more, I fancied it had ceased;
But lo! the vanished company again
Ascending; they approach—I hear their wings
Faint, faint at first; and then an eager sound
Past in a moment—and as faint again!
They tempt the sun to sport amid their plumes;
They tempt the water, or the gleaming ice,
To show them a fair image; 'tis themselves,
Their own fair forms, upon the glimmering plain,

Painted more soft and fair as they descend
Almost to touch ;—then up again aloft,
Up with a sally and a flash of speed,
As if they scorned both resting-place and rest !

1812 ?

VII

TO A BUTTERFLY

Stay near me—do not take thy flight !
A little longer stay in sight !
Much converse do I find in thee,
Historian of my infancy !
Float near me ; do not yet depart !
Dead times revive in thee :
Thou bring'st, gay creature as thou art !
A solemn image to my heart,
My father's family !

Oh ! pleasant, pleasant were the days,
The time, when, in our childish plays,
My sister Emmeline and I
Together chased the butterfly !
A very hunter did I rush
Upon the prey :—with leaps and springs
I followed on from brake to bush ;
But she, God love her ! feared to brush
The dust from off its wings.

1802.

VIII

THE SPARROW'S NEST

Behold, within the leafy shade,
Those bright blue eggs together laid!
On me the chance-discovered sight
Gleamed like a vision of delight.
I started—seeming to espy
The home and sheltered bed,
The Sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by
My Father's house, in wet or dry
My sister Emmeline and I
Together visited.

She looked at it and seemed to fear it;
Dreading, tho' wishing, to be near it:
Such heart was in her, being then
A little Prattler among men.
The Blessing of my later years
Was with me when a boy:
She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
And humble cares, and delicate fears;
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
And love, and thought, and joy.

1801.

IX

THE SOLITARY REAPER

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
  Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
  Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
  And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again!

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;—
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

1803.

X

THREE years she grew in sun and shower,
Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown;
This Child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I will make
A Lady of my own.

Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse: and with me
The Girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.

She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;
And her's shall be the breathing balm,
And her's the silence and the calm
Of mute insensate things.

The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willow bend;
Nor shall she fail to see
Even in the motions of the Storm
Grace that shall mould the Maiden's form
By silent sympathy.

The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

And vital feelings of delight
Shall rear her form to stately height,
Her virgin bosom swell;
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
While she and I together live
Here in this happy dell."

Thus Nature spake—The work was done—
How soon my Lucy's race was run!
She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm, and quiet scene;
The memory of what has been,
And never more will be.

1799.

XI

A SLUMBER did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force ;
She neither hears nor sees ;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

1799.

XII

Strange fits of passion have I known :
And I will dare to tell,
But in the Lover's ear alone,
What once to me befel.

When she I loved looked every day
Fresh as a rose in June,
I to her cottage bent my way,
Beneath an evening-moon.

Upon the moon I fixed my eye ;
All over the wide lea,
With quickening pace my horse drew nigh
Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reached the orchard-plot ;
And, as we climbed the hill,
The sinking moon to Lucy's cot
Came near, and nearer still.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,
Kind Nature's gentlest boon !
And all the while my eyes I kept
On the descending moon.

My horse moved on ; hoof after hoof
He raised, and never stopped :
When down behind the cottage roof,
At once, the bright moon dropped.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
Into a Lover's head !
"O mercy !" to myself I cried,
"If Lucy should be dead !"

1799.

XIII

CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHILD THREE YEARS OLD

Loving she is, and tractable, though wild ;
And Innocence hath privilege in her
To dignify arch looks and laughing eyes ;
And feats of cunning ; and the pretty round
Of trespasses, affected to provoke
Mock-chastisement and partnership in play.
And, as a faggot sparkles on the hearth,
Not less if unattended and alone
Than when both young and old sit gathered round
And take delight in its activity ;
Even so this happy Creature of herself
Is all-sufficient ; solitude to her
Is blithe society, who fills the air
With gladness and involuntary songs.
Light are her sallies as the tripping fawn's
Forth-startled from the fern where she lay couched ;
Unthought-of, unexpected, as the stir

Of the soft breeze ruffling the meadow-flowers,
Or from before it chasing wantonly
The many-coloured images imprest
Upon the bosom of a placid lake.

1811.

XIV

STANZAS

WRITTEN IN MY POCKET-COPY OF THOMSON'S CASTLE OF INDOLENCE

WITHIN our happy Castle there dwelt One
Whom without blame I may not overlook;
For never sun on living creature shone
Who more devout enjoyment with us took:
Here on his hours he hung as on a book,
On his own time here would he float away,
As doth a fly upon a summer brook;
But go to-morrow, or belike to-day,
Seek for him,—he is fled; and whither none can say.

Thus often would he leave our peaceful home,
And find elsewhere his business or delight;
Out of our Valley's limits did he roam:
Full many a time, upon a stormy night,
His voice came to us from the neighbouring height:
Oft could we see him driving full in view
At mid-day when the sun was shining bright;
What ill was on him, what he had to do,
A mighty wonder bred among our quiet crew.

Ah ! piteous sight it was to see this Man
When he came back to us, a withered flower,—
Or like a sinful creature, pale and wan.
Down would he sit ; and without strength or power
Look at the common grass from hour to hour :
And oftentimes, how long I fear to say,
Where apple-trees in blossom made a bower,
Retired in that sunshiny shade he lay ;
And, like a naked Indian, slept himself away.

Great wonder to our gentle tribe it was
Whenever from our Valley he withdrew ;
For happier soul no living creature has
Than he had, being here the long day through.
Some thought he was a lover, and did woo :
Some thought far worse of him, and judged him wrong ;
But verse was what he had been wedded to ;
And his own mind did like a tempest strong
Come to him thus, and drove the weary Wight along.

With him there often walked in friendly guise,
Or lay upon the moss by brook or tree,
A noticeable Man with large grey eyes,
And a pale face that seemed undoubtedly
As if a blooming face it ought to be ;
Heavy his low-hung lip did oft appear,
Deprest by weight of musing Phantasy ;
Profound his forehead was, though not severe ;
Yet some did think that he had little business here :

Sweet heaven forefend ! his was a lawful right ;
Noisy he was, and gamesome as a boy ;

His limbs would toss about him with delight
Like branches when strong winds the trees annoy.
Nor lacked his calmer hours device or toy
To banish listlessness and irksome care;
He would have taught you how you might employ
Yourself; and many did to him repair,—
And certes not in vain; he had inventions rare.

Expedients, too, of simplest sort he tried:
Long blades of grass, plucked round him as he lay,
Made, to his ear attentively applied,
A pipe on which the wind would deftly play;
Glasses he had, that little things display,
The beetle panoplied in gems and gold,
A mailèd angel on a battle-day;
The mysteries that cups of flowers enfold,
And all the gorgeous sights which fairies do behold.

He would entice that other Man to hear
His music, and to view his imagery:
And, sooth, these two were each to the other dear:
No livelier love in such a place could be:
There did they dwell—from earthly labour free,
As happy spirits as were ever seen;
If but a bird, to keep them company,
Or butterfly sate down, they were, I ween,
As pleased as if the same had been a Maiden-queen.

1802.

XV

THERE WAS A BOY

THERE was a Boy ; ye know him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander !—many a time,
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone,
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake ;
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him.—And they would shout
Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call,—with quivering peals,
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
Redoubled and redoubled ; concourse wild
Of jocund din ! And, when there came a pause
Of silence such as baffled his best skill :
Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain-torrents ; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This boy was taken from his mates, and died
In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.
Pre-eminent in beauty is the vale

Where he was born and bred : the church-yard hangs
Upon a slope above the village-school ;
And, through that church-yard when my way has led
On summer evenings, I believe, that there
A long half-hour together I have stood
Mute—looking at the grave in which he lies !

1799.

XVI

ANIMAL TRANQUILLITY AND DECAY

The little hedgerow birds,
That peck along the road, regard him not.
He travels on, and in his face, his step,
His gait, is one expression : every limb,
His look and bending figure, all bespeak
A man who does not move with pain, but moves
With thought.—He is insensibly subdued
To settled quiet : he is one by whom
All effort seems forgotten ; one to whom
Long patience hath such mild composure given,
That patience now doth seem a thing of which
He hath no need. He is by nature led
To peace so perfect that the young behold
With envy, what the Old Man hardly feels.

1798.

XVII

EXPOSTULATION AND REPLY

"Why, William, on that old grey stone,
Thus for the length of half a day,
Why, William, sit you thus alone,
And dream your time away?

Where are your books?—that light bequeathed
To Beings else forlorn and blind!
Up! up! and drink the spirit breathed
From dead men to their kind.

You look round on your Mother Earth,
As if she for no purpose bore you;
As if you were her first-born birth,
And none had lived before you!"

One morning thus, by Esthwaite lake,
When life was sweet, I knew not why,
To me my good friend Matthew spake,
And thus I made reply:

"The eye—it cannot choose but see;
We cannot bid the ear be still;
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
Against or with our will.

Nor less I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.

Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?

—Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,
Conversing as I may,
I sit upon this old grey stone,
And dream my time away."

1798.

XVIII

THE TABLES TURNED

AN EVENING SCENE ON THE SAME SUBJECT

Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books;
Or surely you'll grow double:
Up! up! my Friend, and clear your looks;
Why all this toil and trouble?

The sun, above the mountain's head,
A freshening lustre mellow
Through all the long green fields has spread,
His first sweet evening yellow.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music! on my life,
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!
He, too, is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:—
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up those barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.

1798.

XIX

LINES WRITTEN IN EARLY SPRING

I HEARD a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure:—
But the least motion which they made,
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?

1798.

XX

TO MY SISTER

It is the first mild day of March:
Each minute sweeter than before
The redbreast sings from the tall larch
That stands beside our door.

There is a blessing in the air,
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.

My sister! ('tis a wish of mine)
Now that our morning meal is done,
Make haste, your morning task resign;
Come forth and feel the sun.

Edward will come with you;—and, pray,
Put on with speed your woodland dress;
And bring no book: for this one day
We'll give to idleness.

No joyless forms shall regulate
Our living calendar:
We from to-day, my Friend, will date
The opening of the year.

Love, now a universal birth,
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth:
—It is the hour of feeling.

One moment now may give us more
Than years of toiling reason:
Our minds shall drink at every pore
The spirit of the season.

Some silent laws our hearts will make,
Which they shall long obey:
We for the year to come may take
Our temper from to-day.

And from the blessed power that rolls
About, below, above,
We'll frame the measure of our souls:
They shall be tuned to love.

Then come, my Sister! come, I pray,
With speed put on your woodland dress;
And bring no book: for this one day
We'll give to idleness.

1798.

XXI

MATTHEW

In the School of ——— is a tablet, on which are inscribed, in gilt letters, the Names of the several persons who have been Schoolmasters there since the foundation of the School, with the time at which they entered upon and quitted their office. Opposite to one of those Names the Author wrote the following lines.

If Nature, for a favourite child,
In thee hath tempered so her clay,
That every hour thy heart runs wild,
Yet never once doth go astray,

Read o'er these lines; and then review
This tablet, that thus humbly rears
In such diversity of hue
Its history of two hundred years.

—When through this little wreck of fame,
Cipher and syllable! thine eye
Has travelled down to Matthew's name,
Pause with no common sympathy.

And, if a sleeping tear should wake,
Then be it neither checked nor stayed:
For Matthew a request I make
Which for himself he had not made.

Poor Matthew, all his frolics o'er,
Is silent as a standing pool;
Far from the chimney's merry roar,
And murmur of the village school.

The sighs which Matthew heaved were sighs
Of one tired out with fun and madness;
The tears which came to Matthew's eyes
Were tears of light, the dew of gladness.

Yet, sometimes, when the secret cup
Of still and serious thought went round,
It seemed as if he drank it up—
He felt with spirit so profound.

—Thou soul of God's best earthly mould!
Thou happy Soul! and can it be
That these two words of glittering gold
Are all that must remain of thee?

1799.

XXII

DESCRIPTION OF A GRAND SPECTACLE UPON THE MOUNTAINS

All night the storm endured; and, soon as help
Had been collected from the neighbouring vale,
With morning we renewed our quest: the wind
Was fallen, the rain abated, but the hills
Lay shrouded in impenetrable mist;
And long and hopelessly we sought in vain:
'Till, chancing on that lofty ridge to pass
A heap of ruin—almost without walls

And wholly without roof (the bleached remains
Of a small chapel, where, in ancient time,
The peasants of these lonely valleys used
To meet for worship on that central height)—
We there espied the object of our search,
Lying full three parts buried among tufts
Of heath-plant, under and above him strewn,
To baffle, as he might, the watery storm :
And there we found him breathing peaceably,
Snug as a child that hides itself in sport
'Mid a green hay-cock in a sunny field.
We spake—he made reply, but would not stir
At our entreaty ; less from want of power
Than apprehension and bewildering thoughts.

So was he lifted gently from the ground,
And with their freight homeward the shepherds moved
Through the dull mist, I following—when a step,
A single step, that freed me from the skirts
Of the blind vapour, opened to my view
Glory beyond all glory ever seen
By waking sense or by the dreaming soul !
The appearance, instantaneously disclosed,
Was of a mighty city—boldly say
A wilderness of building, sinking far
And self-withdrawn into a boundless depth,
Far sinking into splendour—without end !
Fabric it seemed of diamond and of gold,
With alabaster domes, and silver spires,
And blazing terrace upon terrace, high
Uplifted ; here, serene pavilions bright,
In avenues disposed ; there, towers begirt

With battlements that on their restless fronts
Bore stars—illumination of all gems!
By earthly nature had the effect been wrought
Upon the dark materials of the storm
Now pacified; on them, and on the coves
And mountain-steeps and summits, whereunto
The vapours had receded, taking there
Their station under a cerulean sky.
Oh, 'twas an unimaginable sight!
Clouds, mists, streams, watery rocks and emerald turf,
Clouds of all tincture, rocks and sapphire sky,
Confused, commingled, mutually inflamed,
Molten together, and composing thus,
Each lost in each, that marvellous array
Of temple, palace, citadel, and huge
Fantastic pomp of structure without name,
In fleecy folds voluminous, enwrapped.
Right in the midst, where interspace appeared
Of open court, an object like a throne
Under a shining canopy of state
Stood fixed; and fixed resemblances were seen
To implements of ordinary use,
But vast in size, in substance glorified;
Such as by Hebrew Prophets were beheld
In vision—forms uncouth of mightiest power
For admiration and mysterious awe.
This little Vale, a dwelling-place of Man,
Lay low beneath my feet; 'twas visible—
I saw not, but I felt that it was there.
That which I *saw* was the revealed abode
Of Spirits in beatitude: my heart
Swelled in my breast.—"I have been dead," I cried,

"And now I live! Oh! wherefore *do* I live?"
And with that pang I prayed to be no more!—
—But I forget our Charge, as utterly
I then forgot him:—there I stood and gazed:
The apparition faded not away,
And I descended.

The Excursion, Book II. l. 805.
Between 1795–1814.

XXIII

Hast thou seen, with flash incessant,
Bubbles gliding under ice,
Bodied forth and evanescent,
No one knows by what device?

Such are thoughts!—A wind-swept meadow
Mimicking a troubled sea,
Such is life; and death a shadow
From the rock eternity!

1818.

PART II

NARRATIVE POEMS

XXIV

LUCY GRAY

OR, SOLITUDE

Oft I had heard of Lucy Gray :
And, when I crossed the wild,
I chanced to see at break of day
The solitary child.

No mate, no comrade Lucy knew ;
She dwelt on a wide moor,
—The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door !

You yet may spy the fawn at play,
The hare upon the green ;
But the sweet face of Lucy Gray
Will never more be seen.

"To-night will be a stormy night—
You to the town must go ;
And take a lantern, Child, to light
Your mother through the snow."

"That, Father! will I gladly do:
'Tis scarcely afternoon—
The minster-clock has just struck two,
And yonder is the moon!"

At this the Father raised his hook,
And snapped a faggot-band;
He plied his work;—and Lucy took
The lantern in her hand.

Not blither is the mountain roe:
With many a wanton stroke
Her feet disperse the powdery snow,
That rises up like smoke.

The storm came on before its time:
She wandered up and down;
And many a hill did Lucy climb:
But never reached the town.

The wretched parents all that night
Went shouting far and wide;
But there was neither sound nor sight
To serve them for a guide.

At day-break on a hill they stood
That overlooked the moor;
And thence they saw a bridge of wood,
A furlong from their door.

They wept—and, turning homeward, cried,
"In heaven we all shall meet;"
—When in the snow the mother spied
The print of Lucy's feet.

Then downwards from the steep hill's edge
They tracked the footmarks small;
And through the broken hawthorn hedge,
And by the long stone-wall;

And then an open field they crossed:
The marks were still the same;
They tracked them on, nor ever lost;
And to the bridge they came.

They followed from the snowy bank
Those footmarks, one by one,
Into the middle of the plank;
And further there were none!

—Yet some maintain that to this day
She is a living child;
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild.

O'er rough and smooth she trips along,
And never looks behind;
And sings a solitary song
That whistles to the wind.

1799.

XXV

THE IDIOT BOY

'Tis eight o'clock,—a clear March night,
The moon is up,—the sky is blue,
The owlet, in the moonlight air,
Shouts from nobody knows where;
He lengthens out his lonely shout,
Halloo! halloo! a long halloo!

—Why bustle thus about your door,
What means this bustle, Betty Foy?
Why are you in this mighty fret?
And why on horseback have you set
Him whom you love, your Idiot Boy?

Scarcely a soul is out of bed;
Good Betty, put him down again;
His lips with joy they burr at you;
But, Betty! what has he to do
With stirrup, saddle, or with rein?

But Betty's bent on her intent;
For her good neighbour, Susan Gale,
Old Susan, she who dwells alone,
Is sick, and makes a piteous moan,
As if her very life would fail.

There's not a house within a mile,
No hand to help them in distress;
Old Susan lies a-bed in pain,
And sorely puzzled are the twain,
For what she ails they cannot guess.

And Betty's husband's at the wood,
Where by the week he doth abide,
A woodman in the distant vale;
There's none to help poor Susan Gale;
What must be done? what will betide?

And Betty from the lane has fetched
Her Pony, that is mild and good;
Whether he be in joy or pain,
Feeding at will along the lane,
Or bringing faggots from the wood.

And he is all in travelling trim,—
And, by the moonlight, Betty Foy
Has on the well-girt saddle set
(The like was never heard of yet)
Him whom she loves, her Idiot Boy.

And he must post without delay
Across the bridge and through the dale,
And by the church, and o'er the down,
To bring a Doctor from the town,
Or she will die, old Susan Gale.

There is no need of boot or spur,
There is no need of whip or wand;
For Johnny has his holly-bough,
And with a *hurly-burly* now
He shakes the green bough in his hand.

And Betty o'er and o'er has told
The Boy, who is her best delight,
Both what to follow, what to shun,
What do, and what to leave undone,
How turn to left, and how to right.

And Betty's most especial charge,
Was, "Johnny! Johnny! mind that you
Come home again, nor stop at all,—
Come home again, whate'er befal,
My Johnny, do, I pray you do."

To this did Johnny answer make,
Both with his head and with his hand,
And proudly shook the bridle too;
And then! his words were not a few,
Which Betty well could understand.

And now that Johnny is just going,
Though Betty 's in a mighty flurry,
She gently pats the Pony's side,
On which her Idiot Boy must ride,
And seems no longer in a hurry.

But when the Pony moved his legs,
Oh ! then for the poor Idiot Boy !
For joy he cannot hold the bridle,
For joy his head and heels are idle,
He 's idle all for very joy.

And while the Pony moved his legs,
In Johnny's left hand you may see
The green bough motionless and dead :
The Moon that shines above his head
Is not more still and mute than he.

His heart it was so full of glee,
That till full fifty yards were gone,
He quite forgot his holly whip,
And all his skill in horsemanship :
Oh ! happy, happy, happy John.

And while the Mother, at the door,
Stands fixed, her face with joy o'erflows,
Proud of herself, and proud of him,
She sees him in his travelling trim,
How quietly her Johnny goes.

The silence of her Idiot Boy,
What hopes it sends to Betty's heart !
He 's at the guide-post--he turns right ;
She watches till he 's out of sight,
And Betty will not then depart.

Burr, burr—now Johnny's lips they burr,
As loud as any mill, or near it ;
Meek as a lamb the Pony moves,
And Johnny makes the noise he loves,
And Betty listens, glad to hear it.

Away she hies to Susan Gale :
Her Messenger 's in merry tune ;
The owlets hoot, the owlets curr,
And Johnny's lips they burr, burr, burr,
As on he goes beneath the moon.

His steed and he right well agree ;
For of this Pony there 's a rumour,
That, should he lose his eyes and ears,
And should he live a thousand years,
He never will be out of humour.

But then he is a horse that thinks !
And when he thinks, his pace is slack ;
Now, though he knows poor Johnny well,
Yet, for his life, he cannot tell
What he has got upon his back.

So through the moonlight lanes they go,
And far into the moonlight dale,
And by the church, and o'er the down,
To bring a Doctor from the town,
To comfort poor old Susan Gale.

And Betty, now at Susan's side,
Is in the middle of her story,
What speedy help her Boy will bring,
With many a most diverting thing,
Of Johnny's wit, and Johnny's glory.

And Betty, still at Susan's side,
By this time is not quite so flurried :
Demure with porringer and plate
She sits, as if in Susan's fate
Her life and soul were buried.

But Betty, poor good woman ! she,
You plainly in her face could read it,
Could lend out of that moment's store
Five years of happiness or more
To any that might need it.

But yet I guess that now and then
With Betty all was not so well;
And to the road she turns her ears,
And thence full many a sound she hears,
Which she to Susan will not tell.

Poor Susan moans, poor Susan groans ;
"As sure as there 's a moon in heaven,"
Cries Betty, "he 'll be back again ;
They 'll both be here—'tis almost ten—
Both will be here before eleven."

Poor Susan moans, poor Susan groans ;
The clock gives warning for eleven ;
'Tis on the stroke—"He must be near,"
Quoth Betty, "and will soon be here,
As sure as there's a moon in heaven."

The clock is on the stroke of twelve,
And Johnny is not yet in sight :
—The Moon 's in heaven, as Betty sees,
But Betty is not quite at ease ;
And Susan has a dreadful night.

And Betty, half an hour ago,
On Johnny vile reflections cast:
"A little idle sauntering Thing!"
With other names, an endless string;
But now that time is gone and past.

And Betty's drooping at the heart,
That happy time all past and gone,
"How can it be he is so late?
The Doctor, he has made him wait;
Susan! they'll both be here anon."

And Susan's growing worse and worse,
And Betty's in a sad *quandary;*
And then there's nobody to say
If she must go, or she must stay!
—She's in a sad *quandary.*

The clock is on the stroke of one;
But neither Doctor nor his Guide
Appears along the moonlight road;
There's neither horse nor man abroad,
And Betty's still at Susan's side.

And Susan now begins to fear
Of sad mischances not a few,
That Johnny may perhaps be drowned;
Or lost, perhaps, and never found;
Which they must both for ever rue.

She prefaced half a hint of this
With, "God forbid it should be true!"
At the first word that Susan said
Cried Betty, rising from the bed,
"Susan, I'd gladly stay with you.

I must be gone, I must away :
Consider, Johnny 's but half-wise ;
Susan, we must take care of him,
If he is hurt in life or limb "—
" Oh God forbid ! " poor Susan cries.

" What can I do ? " says Betty, going,
" What can I do to ease your pain ?
Good Susan tell me, and I 'll stay ;
I fear you 're in a dreadful way,
But I shall soon be back again."

" Nay, Betty, go ! good Betty, go !
There 's nothing that can ease my pain."
Then off she hies ; but with a prayer
That God poor Susan's life would spare,
Till she comes back again.

So, through the moonlight lane she goes,
And far into the moonlight dale ;
And how she ran, and how she walked,
And all that to herself she talked,
Would surely be a tedious tale.

In high and low, above, below,
In great and small, in round and square,
In tree and tower was Johnny seen,
In bush and brake, in black and green ;
'Twas Johnny, Johnny, every where.

And while she crossed the bridge, there came
A thought with which her heart is sore—
Johnny perhaps his horse forsook,
To hunt the moon within the brook,
And never will be heard of more.

Now is she high upon the down,
Alone amid a prospect wide;
There 's neither Johnny nor his Horse
Among the fern or in the gorse;
There 's neither Doctor nor his Guide.

"Oh saints! what is become of him?
Perhaps he 's climbed into an oak,
Where he will stay till he is dead;
Or, sadly he has been misled,
And joined the wandering gipsy-folk.

Or him that wicked Pony 's carried
To the dark cave, the goblin's hall;
Or in the castle he 's pursuing
Among the ghosts his own undoing;
Or playing with the waterfall."

At poor old Susan then she railed,
While to the town she posts away;
"If Susan had not been so ill,
Alas! I should have had him still,
My Johnny, till my dying day."

Poor Betty, in this sad distemper,
The Doctor's self could hardly spare:
Unworthy things she talked, and wild;
Even he, of cattle the most mild,
The Pony had his share.

But now she 's fairly in the town,
And to the Doctor's door she hies;
'Tis silence all on every side;
The town so long, the town so wide,
Is silent as the skies.

And now she 's at the Doctor's door,
She lifts the knocker, rap, rap, rap ;
The Doctor at the casement shows
His glimmering eyes that peep and doze !
And one hand rubs his old night-cap.

"Oh Doctor ! Doctor ! where 's my Johnny ? "
"I'm here, what is 't you want with me ? "
"Oh Sir ! you know I'm Betty Foy,
And I have lost my poor dear Boy,
You know him—him you often see ;

He 's not so wise as some folks be : "
"The devil take his wisdom ! " said
The Doctor, looking somewhat grim,
"What, Woman ! should I know of him ? "
And, grumbling, he went back to bed !

"O woe is me ! O woe is me !
Here will I die ; here will I die ;
I thought to find my lost one here,
But he is neither far nor near,
Oh ! what a wretched Mother I ! "

She stops, she stands, she looks about ;
Which way to turn she cannot tell.
Poor Betty ! it would ease her pain
If she had heart to knock again ;
—The clock strikes three—a dismal knell !

Then up along the town she hies,
No wonder if her senses fail ;
This piteous news so much it shocked her,
She quite forgot to send the Doctor,
To comfort poor old Susan Gale.

And now she 's high upon the down,
And she can see a mile of road :
"O cruel ! I 'm almost threescore ;
Such night as this was ne'er before,
There 's not a single soul abroad."

She listens, but she cannot hear
The foot of horse, the voice of man ;
The streams with softest sound are flowing,
The grass you almost hear it growing,
You hear it now, if e'er you can.

The owlets through the long blue night
Are shouting to each other still :
Fond lovers ! yet not quite hob nob,
They lengthen out the tremulous sob,
That echoes far from hill to hill.

Poor Betty now has lost all hope,
Her thoughts are bent on deadly sin,
A green-grown pond she just has past,
And from the brink she hurries fast,
Lest she should drown herself therein.

And now she sits her down and weeps ;
Such tears she never shed before ;
"Oh dear, dear Pony ! my sweet joy !
Oh carry back my Idiot Boy !
And we will ne'er o'erload thee more."

A thought is come into her head :
The Pony he is mild and good,
And we have always used him well ;
Perhaps he 's gone along the dell,
And carried Johnny to the wood.

Then up she springs as if on wings ;
She thinks no more of deadly sin ;
If Betty fifty ponds should see,
The last of all her thoughts would be
To drown herself therein.

O Reader ! now that I might tell
What Johnny and his Horse are doing !
What they 've been doing all this time,
Oh could I put it into rhyme,
A most delightful tale pursuing !

Perhaps, and no unlikely thought !
He with his Pony now doth roam
The cliffs and peaks so high that are,
To lay his hands upon a star,
And in his pocket bring it home.

Perhaps he's turned himself about,
His face unto his horse's tail,
And, still and mute, in wonder lost,
All silent as a horseman-ghost,
He travels slowly down the vale.

And now, perhaps, is hunting sheep,
A fierce and dreadful hunter he ;
Yon valley, now so trim and green,
In five months' time, should he be seen,
A desert wilderness will be !

Perhaps, with head and heels on fire,
And like the very soul of evil,
He 's galloping away, away,
And so will gallop on for aye,
The bane of all that dread the devil !

I to the Muses have been bound
These fourteen years, by strong indentures :
O gentle Muses ! let me tell
But half of what to him befel ;
He surely met with strange adventures.

O gentle Muses ! is this kind ?
Why will ye thus my suit repel ?
Why of your further aid bereave me ?
And can ye thus unfriended leave me ;
Ye Muses ! whom I love so well ?

Who 's yon, that, near the waterfall,
Which thunders down with headlong force,
Beneath the moon, yet shining fair,
As careless as if nothing were,
Sits upright on a feeding horse ?

Unto his horse—there feeding free,
He seems, I think, the rein to give ;
Of moon or stars he takes no heed ;
Of such we in romances read :
—'Tis Johnny ! Johnny ! as I live.

And that 's the very Pony, too !
Where is she, where is Betty Foy ?
She hardly can sustain her fears ;
The roaring waterfall she hears,
And cannot find her Idiot Boy.

Your Pony 's worth his weight in gold :
Then calm your terrors, Betty Foy !
She 's coming from among the trees,
And now all full in view she sees
Him whom she loves, her Idiot Boy.

And Betty sees the Pony too :
Why stand you thus, good Betty Foy ?
It is no goblin, 'tis no ghost,
'Tis he whom you so long have lost,
He whom you love, your Idiot Boy.

She looks again—her arms are up—
She screams—she cannot move for joy ;
She darts, as with a torrent's force,
She almost has o'erturned the Horse,
And fast she holds her Idiot Boy.

And Johnny burrs, and laughs aloud ;
Whether in cunning or in joy
I cannot tell ; but while he laughs,
Betty a drunken pleasure quaffs
To hear again her Idiot Boy.

And now she 's at the Pony's tail,
And now is at the Pony's head,—
On that side now, and now on this ;
And, almost stifled with her bliss,
A few sad tears does Betty shed.

She kisses o'er and o'er again
Him whom she loves, her Idiot Boy ;
She 's happy here, is happy there,
She is uneasy every where ;
Her limbs are all alive with joy.

She pats the Pony, where or when
She knows not, happy Betty Foy !
The little Pony glad may be,
But he is milder far than she,
You hardly can perceive his joy.

"Oh! Johnny, never mind the Doctor;
You 've done your best, and that is all:"
She took the reins, when this was said,
And gently turned the Pony's head
From the loud waterfall.

By this the stars were almost gone,
The moon was setting on the hill,
So pale you scarcely looked at her:
The little birds began to stir,
Though yet their tongues were still.

The Pony, Betty, and her Boy,
Wind slowly through the woody dale;
And who is she, betimes abroad,
That hobbles up the steep rough road?
Who is it, but old Susan Gale?

Long time lay Susan lost in thought;
And many dreadful fears beset her,
Both for her Messenger and Nurse;
And, as her mind grew worse and worse,
Her body—it grew better.

She turned, she tossed herself in bed,
On all sides doubts and terrors met her;
Point after point did she discuss;
And, while her mind was fighting thus,
Her body still grew better.

"Alas! what is become of them?
These fears can never be endured;
I 'll to the wood."—The word scarce said,
Did Susan rise up from her bed,
As if by magic cured.

Away she goes up hill and down,
And to the wood at length is come;
She spies her Friends, she shouts a greeting;
Oh me! it is a merry meeting
As ever was in Christendom.

The owls have hardly sung their last,
While our four travellers homeward wend;
The owls have hooted all night long,
And with the owls began my song,
And with the owls must end.

For while they all were travelling home,
Cried Betty, "Tell us, Johnny, do,
Where all this long night you have been,
What you have heard, what you have seen:
And, Johnny, mind you tell us true."

Now Johnny all night long had heard
The owls in tuneful concert strive;
No doubt too he the moon had seen;
For in the moonlight he had been
From eight o'clock till five.

And thus, to Betty's question, he
Made answer, like a traveller bold,
(His very words I give to you,)
"The cocks did crow to-whoo, to-whoo,
And the sun did shine so cold!"
—Thus answered Johnny in his glory,
And that was all his travel's story.

1798.

XXVI

PETER BELL

(AN EXTRACT FROM PART FIRST)

All by the moonlight river side
Groaned the poor Beast—alas! in vain;
The staff was raised to loftier height,
And the blows fell with heavier weight
As Peter struck—and struck again.

"Hold!" cried the Squire, "against the rules
Of common sense you 're surely sinning;
This leap is for us all too bold;
Who Peter was, let that be told,
And start from the beginning."

——"A Potter,* Sir, he was by trade,"
Said I, becoming quite collected:
"And wheresoever he appeared,
Full twenty times was Peter feared
For once that Peter was respected.

He, two-and-thirty years or more,
Had been a wild and woodland rover;
Had heard the Atlantic surges roar
On farthest Cornwall's rocky shore,
And trod the cliffs of Dover.

And he had seen Caernarvon's towers,
And well he knew the spire of Sarum;

* In the dialect of the North, a hawker of earthenware is thus designated.

And he had been where Lincoln bell
Flings o'er the fen that ponderous knell—
A far-renowned alarum !

At Doncaster, at York, and Leeds,
And merry Carlisle had he been ;
And all along the Lowlands fair,
All through the bonny shire of Ayr ;
And far as Aberdeen.

And he had been at Inverness ;
And Peter, by the mountain-rills,
Had danced his round with Highland lasses ;
And he had lain beside his asses
On lofty Cheviot hills :

And he had trudged through Yorkshire dales,
Among the rocks and winding *scars ;*
Where deep and low the hamlets lie
Beneath their little patch of sky
And little lot of stars :

And all along the indented coast,
Bespattered with the salt-sea foam ;
Where'er a knot of houses lay
On headland, or in hollow bay ;—
Sure never man like him did roam !

As well might Peter, in the Fleet,
Have been fast bound, a begging debtor ;—
He travelled here, he travelled there ;—
But not the value of a hair
Was heart or head the better.

He roved among the vales and streams,
In the green wood and hollow dell;
They were his dwellings night and day,—
But Nature ne'er could find the way
Into the heart of Peter Bell.

In vain, through every changeful year,
Did Nature lead him as before;
A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.

Small change it made in Peter's heart
To see his gentle panniered train
With more than vernal pleasure feeding,
Where'er the tender grass was leading
Its earliest green along the lane.

In vain, through water, earth, and air,
The soul of happy sound was spread,
When Peter on some April morn,
Beneath the broom or budding thorn,
Made the warm earth his lazy bed.

At noon, when by the forest's edge
He lay beneath the branches high,
The soft blue sky did never melt
Into his heart; he never felt
The witchery of the soft blue sky!

On a fair prospect some have looked
And felt, as I have heard them say,
As if the moving time had been
A thing as steadfast as the scene
On which they gazed themselves away.

Within the breast of Peter Bell
These silent raptures found no place ;
He was a Carl as wild and rude
As ever hue-and-cry pursued,
As ever ran a felon's race.

Of all that lead a lawless life,
Of all that love their lawless lives,
In city or in village small,
He was the wildest far of all ;—
He had a dozen wedded wives.

Nay, start not !—wedded wives—and twelve !
But how one wife could e'er come near him,
In simple truth I cannot tell ;
For, be it said of Peter Bell,
To see him was to fear him.

Though Nature could not touch his heart
By lovely forms, and silent weather,
And tender sounds, yet you might see
At once, that Peter Bell and she
Had often been together.

A savage wildness round him hung
As of a dweller out of doors ;
In his whole figure and his mien
A savage character was seen
Of mountains and of dreary moors.

To all the unshaped half-human thoughts
Which solitary Nature feeds
'Mid summer storms or winter's ice,
Had Peter joined whatever vice
The cruel city breeds.

His face was keen as is the wind
That cuts along the hawthorn-fence ;
Of courage you saw little there,
But, in its stead, a medley air.
Of cunning and of impudence.

He had a dark and sidelong walk,
And long and slouching was his gait ;
Beneath his looks so bare and bold,
You might perceive, his spirit cold
Was playing with some inward bait.

His forehead wrinkled was and furred ;
A work, one-half of which was done
By thinking of his "*whens*" and "*hows ;*"
And half, by knitting of his brows
Beneath the glaring sun.

There was a hardness in his cheek,
There was a hardness in his eye,
As if the man had fixed his face,
In many a solitary place,
Against the wind and open sky !"

1798.

XXVII

RESOLUTION AND INDEPENDENCE

I

THERE was a roaring in the wind all night ;
The rain came heavily and fell in floods ;
But now the sun is rising calm and bright ;

The birds are singing in the distant woods ;
Over his own sweet voice the Stock-dove broods ;
The Jay makes answer as the Magpie chatters ;
And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.

II

All things that love the sun are out of doors ;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth ;
The grass is bright with rain-drops ;—on the moors
The hare is running races in her mirth ;
And with her feet she from the plashy earth
Raises a mist ; that, glittering in the sun,
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

III

I was a Traveller then upon the moor,
I saw the hare that raced about with joy ;
I heard the woods and distant waters roar ;
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy :
The pleasant season did my heart employ :
My old remembrances went from me wholly ;
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.

IV

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might
Of joy in minds that can no further go,
As high as we have mounted in delight
In our dejection do we sink as low ;
To me that morning did it happen so ;
And fears and fancies thick upon me came ;
Dim sadness—and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor could
name.

V

I heard the sky-lark warbling in the sky ;
And I bethought me of the playful hare :
Even such a happy Child of earth am I ;
Even as these blissful creatures do I fare ;
Far from the world I walk, and from all care ;
But there may come another day to me—
Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty.

VI

My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,
As if life's business were a summer mood ;
As if all needful things would come unsought
To genial faith, still rich in genial good ;
But how can He expect that others should
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all ?

VII

I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,
The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride ;
Of Him who walked in glory and in joy,
Following his plough, along the mountain-side :
By our own spirits are we deified :
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness ;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

VIII

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace,
A leading from above, a something given,
Yet it befel, that, in this lonely place,

When I with these untoward thoughts had striven,
Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven
I saw a Man before me unawares:
The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs.

IX

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
Couched on the bald top of an eminence;
Wonder to all who do the same espy,
By what means it could thither come, and whence;
So that it seems a thing endued with sense:
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf
Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun itself;

X

Such seemed this Man, not all alive nor dead,
Nor all asleep—in his extreme old age:
His body was bent double, feet and head
Coming together in life's pilgrimage;
As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage
Of sickness felt by him in times long past,
A more than human weight upon his frame had cast.

XI

Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale face,
Upon a long grey staff of shaven wood:
And, still as I drew near with gentle pace,
Upon the margin of that moorish flood
Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood,
That heareth not the loud winds when they call;
And moveth all together, if it move at all.

XII

At length, himself unsettling, he the pond
Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look
Upon the muddy water, which he conned,
As if he had been reading in a book :
And now a stranger's privilege I took ;
And, drawing to his side, to him did say,
" This morning gives us promise of a glorious day."

XIII

A gentle answer did the old Man make,
In courteous speech which forth he slowly drew :
And him with further words I thus bespake,
" What occupation do you there pursue ?
This is a lonesome place for one like you."
Ere he replied, a flash of mild surprise
Broke from the sable orbs of his yet-vivid eyes.

XIV

His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,
But each in solemn order followed each,
With something of a lofty utterance drest—
Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach
Of ordinary men ; a stately speech ;
Such as grave Livers do in Scotland use,
Religious men, who give to God and man their dues.

XV

He told, that to these waters he had come
To gather leeches, being old and poor :
Employment hazardous and wearisome !

And he had many hardships to endure :
From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor ;
Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance ;
And in this way he gained an honest maintenance.

XVI

The old Man still stood talking by my side ;
But now his voice to me was like a stream
Scarce heard ; nor word for word could I divide ;
And the whole body of the Man did seem
Like one whom I had met with in a dream ;
Or like a man from some far region sent,
To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.

XVII

My former thoughts returned : the fear that kills ;
And hope that is unwilling to be fed ;
Cold, pain, and labour, and all fleshly ills ;
And mighty Poets in their misery dead.
—Perplexed, and longing to be comforted,
My question eagerly did I renew,
"How is it that you live, and what is it you do?"

XVIII

He with a smile did then his words repeat ;
And said, that, gathering leeches, far and wide
He travelled ; stirring thus about his feet
The waters of the pools where they abide.
"Once I could meet with them on every side ;
But they have dwindled long by slow decay ;
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may."

XIX

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
The old Man's shape, and speech—all troubled me :
In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
About the weary moors continually,
Wandering about alone and silently.
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed.

XX

And soon with this he other matter blended,
Cheerfully uttered, with demeanour kind,
But stately in the main ; and when he ended,
I could have laughed myself to scorn to find
In that decrepit Man so firm a mind.
" God," said I, " be my help and stay secure ;
I 'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor ! "

1802.

XXVIII

THE BROTHERS

" These Tourists, heaven preserve us ! needs must live
A profitable life : some glance along,
Rapid and gay, as if the earth were air,
And they were butterflies to wheel about
Long as the summer lasted : some, as wise,
Perched on the forehead of a jutting crag,
Pencil in hand and book upon the knee,
Will look and scribble, scribble on and look,
Until a man might travel twelve stout miles,

Or reap an acre of his neighbour's corn.
But, for that moping Son of Idleness,
Why can he tarry *yonder ?*—In our church-yard
Is neither epitaph nor monument,
Tombstone nor name—only the turf we tread
And a few natural graves."
To Jane, his wife,
Thus spake the homely Priest of Ennerdale.
It was a July evening ; and he sate
Upon the long stone-seat beneath the eaves
Of his old cottage,—as it chanced, that day,
Employed in winter's work. Upon the stone
His wife sate near him, teasing matted wool,
While, from the twin cards toothed with glittering wire,
He fed the spindle of his youngest child,
Who, in the open air, with due accord
Of busy hands and back-and-forward steps,
Her large round wheel was turning. Towards the field
In which the Parish Chapel stood alone,
Girt round with a bare ring of mossy wall,
While half an hour went by, the Priest had sent
Many a long look of wonder : and at last,
Risen from his seat, beside the snow-white ridge
Of carded wool which the old man had piled
He laid his implements with gentle care,
Each in the other locked ; and, down the path
That from his cottage to the church-yard led,
He took his way, impatient to accost
The Stranger, whom he saw still lingering there.

'Twas one well known to him in former days,
A Shepherd-lad ; who ere his sixteenth year

Had left that calling, tempted to entrust
His expectations to the fickle winds
And perilous waters ; with the mariners
A fellow-mariner ;—and so had fared
Through twenty seasons ; but he had been reared
Among the mountains, and he in his heart
Was half a shepherd on the stormy seas.
Oft in the piping shrouds had Leonard heard
The tones of waterfalls, and inland sounds
Of caves and trees :—and, when the regular wind
Between the tropics filled the steady sail,
And blew with the same breath through days and weeks,
Lengthening invisibly its weary line
Along the cloudless Main, he, in those hours
Of tiresome indolence, would often hang
Over the vessel's side, and gaze and gaze ;
And, while the broad blue wave and sparkling foam
Flashed round him images and hues that wrought
In union with the employment of his heart,
He, thus by feverish passion overcome,
Even with the organs of his bodily eye,
Below him, in the bosom of the deep,
Saw mountains ; saw the forms of sheep that grazed
On verdant hills—with dwellings among trees,
And shepherds clad in the same country grey
Which he himself had worn.*

And now, at last,
From perils manifold, with some small wealth
Acquired by traffic 'mid the Indian Isles,

* This description of the Calenture is sketched from an imperfect recollection of an admirable one in prose, by Mr. Gilbert, author of the *Hurricane*.

To his paternal home he is returned,
With a determined purpose to resume
The life he had lived there; both for the sake
Of many darling pleasures, and the love
Which to an only brother he has borne
In all his hardships, since that happy time
When, whether it blew foul or fair, they two
Were brother-shepherds on their native hills.
—They were the last of all their race: and now,
When Leonard had approached his home, his heart
Failed in him; and, not venturing to enquire
Tidings of one so long and dearly loved,
He to the solitary church-yard turned;
That, as he knew in what particular spot
His family were laid, he thence might learn
If still his Brother lived, or to the file
Another grave was added.—He had found
Another grave,—near which a full half-hour
He had remained; but, as he gazed, there grew
Such a confusion in his memory,
That he began to doubt; and even to hope
That he had seen this heap of turf before,—
That it was not another grave; but one
He had forgotten. He had lost his path,
As up the vale, that afternoon, he walked
Through fields which once had been well known to him:
And oh what joy this recollection now
Sent to his heart! he lifted up his eyes,
And, looking round, imagined that he saw
Strange alteration wrought on every side
Among the woods and fields, and that the rocks,
And everlasting hills themselves were changed.

By this the Priest, who down the field had come,
Unseen by Leonard, at the church-yard gate
Stopped short,—and thence, at leisure, limb by limb
Perused him with a gay complacency.
Ay, thought the Vicar, smiling to himself,
'Tis one of those who needs must leave the path
Of the world's business to go wild alone:
His arms have a perpetual holiday;
The happy man will creep about the fields,
Following his fancies by the hour, to bring
Tears down his cheek, or solitary smiles
Into his face, until the setting sun
Write fool upon his forehead.—Planted thus
Beneath a shed that over-arched the gate
Of this rude church-yard, till the stars appeared
The good Man might have communed with himself,
But that the Stranger, who had left the grave,
Approached; he recognised the Priest at once,
And, after greetings interchanged, and given
By Leonard to the Vicar as to one
Unknown to him, this dialogue ensued.

Leonard. You live, Sir, in these dales, a quiet life:
Your years make up one peaceful family;
And who would grieve and fret, if, welcome come
And welcome gone, they are so like each other,
They cannot be remembered? Scarce a funeral
Comes to this church-yard once in eighteen months;
And yet, some changes must take place among you:
And you, who dwell here, even among these rocks,
Can trace the finger of mortality,
And see, that with our threescore years and ten
We are not all that perish.——I remember,

(For many years ago I passed this road)
There was a foot-way all along the fields
By the brook-side—'tis gone—and that dark cleft!
To me it does not seem to wear the face
Which then it had!
Priest. Nay, Sir, for aught I know,
That chasm is much the same—
Leonard. But, surely, yonder—
Priest. Ay, there, indeed, your memory is a friend
That does not play you false.—On that tall pike
(It is the loneliest place of all these hills)
There were two springs which bubbled side by side,
As if they had been made that they might be
Companions for each other: the huge crag
Was rent with lightning—one hath disappeared;
The other, left behind, is flowing still.
For accidents and changes such as these,
We want not store of them;—a water-spout
Will bring down half a mountain; what a feast
For folks that wander up and down like you,
To see an acre's breadth of that wide cliff
One roaring cataract! a sharp May-storm
Will come with loads of January snow,
And in one night send twenty score of sheep
To feed the ravens; or a shepherd dies
By some untoward death among the rocks:
The ice breaks up and sweeps away a bridge;
A wood is felled:—and then for our own homes!
A child is born or christened, a field ploughed,
A daughter sent to service, a web spun,
The old house-clock is decked with a new face;
And hence, so far from wanting facts or dates

To chronicle the time, we all have here
A pair of diaries,—one serving, Sir,
For the whole dale, and one for each fire-side—
Yours was a stranger's judgment : for historians,
Commend me to these valleys !

Leonard. Yet your church-yard
Seems, if such freedom may be used with you,
To say that you are heedless of the past :
An orphan could not find his mother's grave :
Here 's neither head nor foot-stone, plate of brass,
Cross-bones nor skull,—type of our earthly state
Nor emblem of our hopes : the dead man's home
Is but a fellow to that pasture-field.

Priest. Why, there, Sir, is a thought that 's new to me !
The stone-cutters, 'tis true, might beg their bread
If every English church-yard were like ours ;
Yet your conclusion wanders from the truth :
We have no need of names and epitaphs ;
We talk about the dead by our fire-sides.
And then, for our immortal part ! *we* want
No symbols, Sir, to tell us that plain tale :
The thought of death sits easy on the man
Who has been born and dies among the mountains.

Leonard. Your Dalesmen, then, do in each other's thoughts
Possess a kind of second life : no doubt
You, Sir, could help me to the history
Of half these graves ?

Priest. For eight-score winters past,
With what I 've witnessed, and with what I 've heard,
Perhaps I might ; and, on a winter-evening,
If you were seated at my chimney's nook,

By turning o'er these hillocks one by one,
We two could travel, Sir, through a strange round;
Yet all in the broad highway of the world.
Now there 's a grave—your foot is half upon it,—
It looks just like the rest; and yet that man
Died broken-hearted.

Leonard. 'Tis a common case.
We 'll take another: who is he that lies
Beneath yon ridge, the last of those three graves?
It touches on that piece of native rock
Left in the church-yard wall.

Priest. That 's Walter Ewbank.
He had as white a head and fresh a cheek
As ever were produced by youth and age
Engendering in the blood of hale fourscore.
Through five long generations had the heart
Of Walter's forefathers o'erflowed the bounds
Of their inheritance, that single cottage—
You see it yonder! and those few green fields.
They toiled and wrought, and still, from sire to son,
Each struggled, and each yielded as before
A little—yet a little,—and old Walter,
They left to him the family heart, and land
With other burthens than the crop it bore.
Year after year the old man still kept up
A cheerful mind,—and buffeted with bond,
Interest, and mortgages; at last he sank,
And went into his grave before his time.
Poor Walter! whether it was care that spurred him
God only knows, but to the very last
He had the lightest foot in Ennerdale:
His pace was never that of an old man:

I almost see him tripping down the path
With his two grandsons after him :—but you,
Unless our Landlord be your host to-night,
Have far to travel,—and on these rough paths
Even in the longest day of midsummer—
Leonard. But those two Orphans !
Priest. Orphans !—Such they were—
Yet not while Walter lived :—for, though their parents
Lay buried side by side as now they lie,
The old man was a father to the boys,
Two fathers in one father : and if tears,
Shed when he talked of them where they were not,
And hauntings from the infirmity of love,
Are aught of what makes up a mother's heart,
This old Man, in the day of his old age,
Was half a mother to them.—If you weep, Sir,
To hear a stranger talking about strangers,
Heaven bless you when you are among your kindred !
Ay—you may turn that way—it is a grave
Which will bear looking at.
Leonard. These boys—I hope
They loved this good old Man ?—
Priest. They did—and truly :
But that was what we almost overlooked,
They were such darlings of each other. Yes,
Though from the cradle they had lived with Walter,
The only kinsman near them, and though he
Inclined to both by reason of his age,
With a more fond, familiar, tenderness ;
They, notwithstanding, had much love to spare,
And it all went into each other's hearts.
Leonard, the elder by just eighteen months,

Was two years taller : 'twas a joy to see,
To hear, to meet them !—From their house the school
Is distant three short miles, and in the time
Of storm and thaw, when every water-course
And unbridged stream, such as you may have noticed
Crossing our roads at every hundred steps,
Was swoln into a noisy rivulet,
Would Leonard then, when elder boys remained
At home, go staggering through the slippery fords,
Bearing his brother on his back. I have seen him,
On windy days, in one of those stray brooks,
Ay, more than once I have seen him, mid-leg deep,
Their two books lying both on a dry stone,
Upon the hither side : and once I said,
As I remember, looking round these rocks
And hills on which we all of us were born,
That God who made the great book of the world
Would bless such piety—

Leonard. It may be then—

Priest. Never did worthier lads break English bread ;
The very brightest Sunday Autumn saw
With all its mealy clusters of ripe nuts,
Could never keep those boys away from church,
Or tempt them to an hour of sabbath breach.
Leonard and James ! I warrant, every corner
Among these rocks, and every hollow place
That venturous foot could reach, to one or both
Was known as well as to the flowers that grow there.
Like roe-bucks they went bounding o'er the hills ;
They played like two young ravens on the crags :
Then they could write, ay and speak too, as well
As many of their betters—and for Leonard !

The very night before he went away,
In my own house I put into his hand
A bible, and I 'd wager house and field
That, if he be alive, he has it yet.
Leonard. It seems, these Brothers have not lived to be
A comfort to each other—
Priest. That they might
Live to such end is what both old and young
In this our valley all of us have wished,
And what, for my part, I have often prayed :
But Leonard—
Leonard. Then James still is left among you !
Priest. 'Tis of the elder brother I am speaking :
They had an uncle ;—he was at that time
A thriving man, and trafficked on the seas :
And, but for that same uncle, to this hour
Leonard had never handled rope or shroud :
For the boy loved the life which we lead here :
And though of unripe years, a stripling only,
His soul was knit to this his native soil.
But, as I said, old Walter was too weak
To strive with such a torrent ; when he died,
The estate and house were sold ; and all their sheep,
A pretty flock, and which, for aught I know,
Had clothed the Ewbanks for a thousand years :—
Well—all was gone, and they were destitute,
And Leonard, chiefly for his Brother's sake,
Resolved to try his fortune on the seas.
Twelve years are past since we had tidings from him.
If there were one among us who had heard
That Leonard Ewbank was come home again,

From the Great Gavel,* down by Leeza's banks,
And down the Enna, far as Egremont,
The day would be a joyous festival;
And those two bells of ours, which there you see
Hanging in the open air—but, O good Sir!
This is sad talk—they'll never sound for him—
Living or dead.—When last we heard of him,
He was in slavery among the Moors
Upon the Barbary coast.—'Twas not a little
That would bring down his spirit; and no doubt,
Before it ended in his death, the Youth
Was sadly crossed.—Poor Leonard! when we parted,
He took me by the hand, and said to me,
If e'er he should grow rich, he would return,
To live in peace upon his father's land,
And lay his bones among us.

Leonard. If that day
Should come, 't would needs be a glad day for him;
He would himself, no doubt, be happy then
As any that should meet him—

Priest. Happy! Sir—

Leonard. You said his kindred all were in their graves,
And that he had one Brother—

Priest. That is but
A fellow-tale of sorrow. From his youth
James, though not sickly, yet was delicate;

* The Great Gavel, so called, I imagine, from its resemblance to the gable end of a house, is one of the highest of the Cumberland mountains. It stands at the head of the several vales of Ennerdale, Wastdale, and Borrowdale.

The Leeza is a river which flows into the Lake of Ennerdale: on issuing from the Lake, it changes its name, and is called the End, Eyne, or Enna. It falls into the sea a little below Egremont.

And Leonard being always by his side
Had done so many offices about him,
That, though he was not of a timid nature,
Yet still the spirit of a mountain-boy
In him was somewhat checked; and, when his Brother
Was gone to sea, and he was left alone,
The little colour that he had was soon
Stolen from his cheek; he drooped, and pined, and pined—

Leonard. But these are all the graves of full-grown men!

Priest. Ay, Sir, that passed away: we took him to us;
He was the child of all the dale—he lived
Three months with one, and six months with another;
And wanted neither food, nor clothes, nor love:
And many, many happy days were his.
But, whether blithe or sad, 'tis my belief
His absent Brother still was at his heart.
And, when he dwelt beneath our roof, we found
(A practice till this time unknown to him)
That often, rising from his bed at night,
He in his sleep would walk about, and sleeping
He sought his brother Leonard.—You are moved!
Forgive me, Sir: before I spoke to you,
I judged you most unkindly.

Leonard. But this Youth,
How did he die at last?

Priest. One sweet May-morning,
(It will be twelve years since when Spring returns)
He had gone forth among the new-dropped lambs,
With two or three companions, whom their course
Of occupation led from height to height

Under a cloudless sun—till he, at length,
Through weariness, or, haply, to indulge
The humour of the moment, lagged behind.
You see yon precipice;—it wears the shape
Of a vast building made of many crags;
And in the midst is one particular rock
That rises like a column from the vale,
Whence by our shepherds it is called, THE PILLAR.
Upon its aëry summit crowned with heath,
The loiterer, not unnoticed by his comrades,
Lay stretched at ease; but, passing by the place
On their return, they found that he was gone.
No ill was feared; till one of them by chance
Entering, when evening was far spent, the house
Which at that time was James's home, there learned
That nobody had seen him all that day:
The morning came, and still he was unheard of:
The neighbours were alarmed, and to the brook
Some hastened; some ran to the lake: ere noon
They found him at the foot of that same rock
Dead, and with mangled limbs. The third day after
I buried him, poor Youth, and there he lies!

Leonard. And that then *is* his grave!—Before his death
You say that he saw many happy years?

Priest. Ay, that he did—

Leonard. And all went well with him?—

Priest. If he had one, the youth had twenty homes.

Leonard. And you believe, then, that his mind was easy?—

Priest. Yes, long before he died, he found that time
Is a true friend to sorrow; and unless
His thoughts were turned on Leonard's luckless fortune,

He talked about him with a cheerful love.
Leonard. He could not come to an unhallowed end!
Priest. Nay, God forbid!—You recollect I mentioned
A habit which disquietude and grief
Had brought upon him; and we all conjectured
That, as the day was warm, he had lain down
On the soft heath,—and, waiting for his comrades,
He there had fallen asleep; that in his sleep
He to the margin of the precipice
Had walked, and from the summit had fallen headlong:
And so no doubt he perished. When the Youth
Fell, in his hand he must have grasp'd, we think,
His shepherd's staff; for on that Pillar of rock
It had been caught mid way; and there for years
It hung;—and mouldered there.

The Priest here ended—
The Stranger would have thanked him, but he felt
A gushing from his heart, that took away
The power of speech. Both left the spot in silence;
And Leonard, when they reached the church-yard gate,
As the Priest lifted up the latch, turned round,—
And, looking at the grave, he said, "My brother!"
The Vicar did not hear the words: and now,
He pointed towards his dwelling-place, entreating
That Leonard would partake his homely fare:
The other thanked him with an earnest voice;
But added, that, the evening being calm,
He would pursue his journey. So they parted.

It was not long ere Leonard reached a grove
That overhung the road: he there stopped short,

And, sitting down beneath the trees, reviewed
All that the Priest had said : his early years
Were with him :—his long absence, cherished hopes,
And thoughts which had been his an hour before,
All pressed on him with such a weight, that now,
This vale, where he had been so happy, seemed
A place in which he could not bear to live :
So he relinquished all his purposes.
He travelled back to Egremont : and thence,
That night, he wrote a letter to the Priest,
Reminding him of what had passed between them ;
And adding, with a hope to be forgiven,
That it was from the weakness of his heart
He had not dared to tell him who he was.
This done, he went on shipboard, and is now
A Seaman, a grey-headed Mariner.

1800.

XXIX

MICHAEL

A PASTORAL POEM

If from the public way you turn your steps
Up the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,
You will suppose that with an upright path
Your feet must struggle ; in such bold ascent
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.
But, courage ! for around that boisterous brook
The mountains have all opened out themselves,
And made a hidden valley of their own.
No habitation can be seen ; but they
Who journey thither find themselves alone

With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
That overhead are sailing in the sky.
It is in truth an utter solitude;
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
But for one object which you might pass by,
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones!
And to that simple object appertains
A story—unenriched with strange events,
Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside,
Or for the summer shade. It was the first
Of those domestic tales that spake to me
Of Shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men
Whom I already loved;—not verily
For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills
Where was their occupation and abode.
And hence this Tale, while I was yet a Boy
Careless of books, yet having felt the power
Of Nature, by the gentle agency
Of natural objects, led me on to feel
For passions that were not my own, and think
(At random and imperfectly indeed)
On man, the heart of man, and human life.
Therefore, although it be a history
Homely and rude, I will relate the same
For the delight of a few natural hearts;
And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
Of youthful Poets, who among these hills
Will be my second self when I am gone.

Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name;

An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength : his mind was keen,
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs,
And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
And watchful more than ordinary men.
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
Of blasts of every tone ; and, oftentimes,
When others heeded not, He heard the South
Make subterraneous music, like the noise
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
"The winds are now devising work for me!"
And, truly, at all times, the storm, that drives
The traveller to a shelter, summoned him
Up to the mountains : he had been alone
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him, and left him, on the heights.
So lived he till his eightieth year was past.
And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed
The common air ; hills, which with vigorous step
He had so often climbed ; which had impressed
So many incidents upon his mind
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear ;
Which, like a book, preserved the memory
Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts
The certainty of honourable gain ;

Those fields, those hills—what could they less? had laid
Strong hold on his affections, were to him
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been passed in singleness.
His Helpmate was a comely matron, old—
Though younger than himself full twenty years.
She was a woman of a stirring life,
Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had
Of antique form; this large, for spinning wool;
That small, for flax; and if one wheel had rest
It was because the other was at work.
The Pair had but one inmate in their house,
An only Child, who had been born to them
When Michael, telling o'er his years, began
To deem that he was old,—in shepherd's phrase,
With one foot in the grave. This only Son,
With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,
The one of an inestimable worth,
Made all their household. I may truly say,
That they were as a proverb in the vale
For endless industry. When day was gone,
And from their occupations out of doors
The Son and Father were come home, even then,
Their labour did not cease; unless when all
Turned to the cleanly supper-board, and there,
Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk,
Sat round the basket piled with oaten cakes,
And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when the meal
Was ended, Luke (for so the Son was named)
And his old Father both betook themselves

To such convenient work as might employ
Their hands by the fire-side ; perhaps to card
Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
Or other implement of house or field.

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge,
That in our ancient uncouth country style
With huge and black projection overbrowed
Large space beneath, as duly as the light
Of day grew dim the Housewife hung a lamp ;
An aged utensil, which had performed
Service beyond all others of its kind.
Early at evening did it burn—and late,
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,
Which, going by from year to year, had found,
And left the couple neither gay perhaps
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
Living a life of eager industry.
And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year,
There by the light of this old lamp they sate,
Father and Son, while far into the night
The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,
Making the cottage through the silent hours
Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.
This light was famous in its neighbourhood,
And was a public symbol of the life
That thrifty Pair had lived. For, as it chanced,
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
And westward to the village near the lake ;

And from this constant light, so regular
And so far seen, the House itself, by all
Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
Both old and young, was named THE EVENING STAR.

Thus living on through such a length of years,
The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
Have loved his Helpmate; but to Michael's heart
This son of his old age was yet more dear—
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all—
Than that a child, more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man,
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
And stirrings of inquietude, when they
By tendency of nature needs must fail.
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For pastime and delight, as is the use
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked
His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand.

And, in a later time, ere yet the Boy
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love,
Albeit of a stern unbending mind,
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he
Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool
Sate with a fettered sheep before him stretched
Under the large old oak, that near his door

Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade,
Chosen for the Shearer's covert from the sun,
Thence in our rustic dialect was called
The CLIPPING TREE,* a name which yet it bears.
There, while they two were sitting in the shade,
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts
Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew up
A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek
Two steady roses that were five years old;
Then Michael from a winter coppice cut
With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
With iron, making it throughout in all
Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,
And gave it to the Boy; wherewith equipt
He as a watchman oftentimes was placed
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock;
And, to his office prematurely called,
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,
Something between a hindrance and a help;
And for this cause not always, I believe,
Receiving from his Father hire of praise;
Though nought was left undone which staff, or voice,
Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.

* Clipping is the word used in the North of England for shearing.

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
Against the mountain blasts; and to the heights,
Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,
He with his Father daily went, and they
Were as companions, why should I relate
That objects which the Shepherd loved before
Were dearer now? that from the Boy there came
Feelings and emanations—things which were
Light to the sun and music to the wind;
And that the old Man's heart seemed born again?

Thus in his Father's sight the Boy grew up:
And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year,
He was his comfort and his daily hope.

While in this sort the simple household lived
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
Distressful tidings. Long before the time
Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound
In surety for his brother's son, a man
Of an industrious life, and ample means;
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
Had prest upon him; and old Michael now
Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture,
A grievous penalty, but little less
Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,
At the first hearing, for a moment took
More hope out of his life than he supposed
That any old man ever could have lost.
As soon as he had armed himself with strength
To look his trouble in the face, it seemed
The Shepherd's sole resource to sell at once
A portion of his patrimonial fields.

Such was his first resolve ; he thought again,
And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he,
Two evenings after he had heard the news,
"I have been toiling more than seventy years,
And in the open sunshine of God's love
Have we all lived ; yet if these fields of ours
Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think
That I could not lie quiet in my grave.
Our lot is a hard lot ; the sun himself
Has scarcely been more diligent than I ;
And I have lived to be a fool at last
To my own family. An evil man
That was, and made an evil choice, if he
Were false to us ; and if he were not false,
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him ;—but
'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.

When I began, my purpose was to speak
Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.
Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel ; the land
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free ;
He shall possess it, free as is the wind
That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,
Another kinsman—he will be our friend
In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
Thriving in trade—and Luke to him shall go,
And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift
He quickly will repair this loss, and then
He may return to us. If here he stay,
What can be done ? Where every one is poor,
What can be gained ? "

At this the old Man paused,
And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
Was busy, looking back into past times.
There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,
He was a parish-boy—at the church-door
They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence
And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbours bought
A basket, which they filled with pedlar's wares;
And, with this basket on his arm, the lad
Went up to London, found a master there,
Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy
To go and overlook his merchandise
Beyond the seas; where he grew wondrous rich,
And left estates and monies to the poor,
And, at his birth-place, built a chapel floored
With marble, which he sent from foreign lands.
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,
And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,
And thus resumed:—"Well, Isabel! this scheme
These two days, has been meat and drink to me.
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.
—We have enough—I wish indeed that I
Were younger;—but this hope is a good hope.
—Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best
Buy for him more, and let us send him forth
To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:
—If he *could* go, the Boy should go to-night."

Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
With a light heart. The Housewife for five days
Was restless morn and night, and all day long

Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
Things needful for the journey of her son.
But Isabel was glad when Sunday came
To stop her in her work: for, when she lay
By Michael's side, she through the last two nights
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
And when they rose at morning she could see
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon
She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
Were sitting at the door, "Thou must not go:
We have no other Child but thee to lose,
None to remember—do not go away,
For if thou leave thy Father he will die."
The Youth made answer with a jocund voice;
And Isabel, when she had told her fears,
Recovered heart. That evening her best fare
Did she bring forth, and all together sat
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

With daylight Isabel resumed her work;
And all the ensuing week the house appeared
As cheerful as a grove in Spring: at length
The expected letter from their kinsman came,
With kind assurances that he would do
His utmost for the welfare of the Boy;
To which, requests were added, that forthwith
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
The letter was read over; Isabel
Went forth to show it to the neighbours round;
Nor was there at that time on English land
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel
Had to her house returned, the old Man said,

"He shall depart to-morrow." To this word
The Housewife answered, talking much of things
Which, if at such short notice he should go,
Would surely be forgotten. But at length
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

Near the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,
In that deep valley, Michael had designed
To build a Sheep-fold; and, before he heard
The tidings of his melancholy loss,
For this same purpose he had gathered up
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked:
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped,
And thus the old Man spake to him:—"My Son,
To-morrow thou wilt leave me: with full heart
I look upon thee, for thou art the same
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,
And all thy life hast been my daily joy.
I will relate to thee some little part
Of our two histories; 'twill do thee good
When thou art from me, even if I should touch
On things thou canst not know of.——After thou
First cam'st into the world—as oft befals
To new-born infants—thou didst sleep away
Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,
And still I loved thee with increasing love.
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds
Than when I heard thee by our own fire-side
First uttering, without words, a natural tune;

While thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month,
And in the open fields my life was passed
And on the mountains; else I think that thou
Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.
But we were playmates, Luke: among these hills,
As well thou knowest, in us the old and young
Have played together, nor with me didst thou
Lack any pleasure which a boy can know."
Luke had a manly heart; but at these words
He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,
And said, "Nay, do not take it so—I see
That these are things of which I need not speak.
—Even to the utmost I have been to thee
A kind and a good Father: and herein
I but repay a gift which I myself
Received at others' hands; for, though now old
Beyond the common life of man, I still
Remember them who loved me in my youth.
Both of them sleep together: here they lived,
As all their Forefathers had done; and when
At length their time was come, they were not loth
To give their bodies to the family mould.
I wished that thou shouldst live the life they lived:
But, 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,
And see so little gain from threescore years.
These fields were burthened when they came to me;
Till I was forty years of age, not more
Than half of my inheritance was mine.
I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work,
And till these three weeks past the land was free.
—It looks as if it never could endure

Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke,
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
That thou should'st go."
At this the old Man paused;
Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,
Thus, after a short silence, he resumed:
"This was a work for us; and now, my Son,
It is a work for me. But, lay one stone—
Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.
Nay, Boy, be of good hope;—we both may live
To see a better day. At eighty-four
I still am strong and hale;—do thou thy part;
I will do mine.—I will begin again
With many tasks that were resigned to thee:
Up to the heights, and in among the storms,
Will I without thee go again, and do
All works which I was wont to do alone,
Before I knew thy face.—Heaven bless thee, Boy!
Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast
With many hopes; it should be so—yes—yes—
I knew that thou could'st never have a wish
To leave me, Luke: thou hast been bound to me
Only by links of love: when thou art gone,
What will be left to us!—But, I forget
My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,
As I requested; and hereafter, Luke,
When thou art gone away, should evil men
Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,
And of this moment; hither turn thy thoughts,
And God will strengthen thee: amid all fear
And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou
May'st bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived,

Who, being innocent, did for that cause
Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well—
When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see
A work which is not here: a covenant
'Twill be between us; but, whatever fate
Befal thee, I shall love thee to the last,
And bear thy memory with me to the grave."

The Shepherd ended here; and Luke stooped down,
And, as his Father had requested, laid
The first stone of the Sheep-fold. At the sight
The old Man's grief broke from him; to his heart
He pressed his Son, he kissèd him and wept;
And to the house together they returned.
—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace,
Ere the night fell:—with morrow's dawn the Boy
Began his journey, and when he had reached
The public way, he put on a bold face;
And all the neighbours, as he passed their doors,
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,
That followed him till he was out of sight.

A good report did from their Kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well-doing: and the Boy
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were throughout
"The prettiest letters that were ever seen."
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.
So, many months passed on: and once again
The Shepherd went about his daily work
With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour

He to that valley took his way, and there
Wrought at the Sheep-fold. Meantime Luke began
To slacken in his duty; and, at length,
He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil courses: ignominy and shame
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.

There is a comfort in the strength of love;
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would overset the brain, or break the heart:
I have conversed with more than one who well
Remember the old Man, and what he was
Years after he had heard this heavy news.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,
And listened to the wind; and, as before,
Performed all kinds of labour for his sheep,
And for the land, his small inheritance.
And to that hollow dell from time to time
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
The pity which was then in every heart
For the old Man—and 'tis believed by all
That many and many a day he thither went,
And never lifted up a single stone.

There, by the Sheep-fold, sometimes was he seen
Sitting alone, or with his faithful Dog,
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
The length of full seven years, from time to time,

He at the building of this Sheep-fold wrought,
And left the work unfinished when he died.
Three years, or little more, did Isabel
Survive her Husband : at her death the estate
Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.
The Cottage which was named the EVENING STAR
Is gone—the ploughshare has been through the ground
On which it stood ; great changes have been wrought
In all the neighbourhood :—yet the oak is left
That grew beside their door ; and the remains
Of the unfinished Sheep-fold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head Ghyll.

1800.

XXX

THE CHURCHYARD AMONG THE MOUNTAINS

"These grassy heaps lie amicably close,"
Said I, "like surges heaving in the wind
Along the surface of a mountain pool :
Whence comes it, then, that yonder we behold
Five graves, and only five, that rise together
Unsociably sequestered, and encroaching
On the smooth play-ground of the village-school ? "

The Vicar answered,—"No disdainful pride
In them who rest beneath, nor any course
Of strange or tragic accident, hath helped
To place those hillocks in that lonely guise.
—Once more look forth, and follow with your sight

The length of road that from yon mountain's base
Through bare enclosures stretches, 'till its line
Is lost within a little tuft of trees ;
Then, reappearing in a moment, quits
The cultured fields ; and up the heathy waste,
Mounts, as you see, in mazes serpentine,
Led towards an easy outlet of the vale.
That little shady spot, that sylvan tuft,
By which the road is hidden, also hides
A cottage from our view ; though I discern
(Ye scarcely can) amid its sheltering trees
The smokeless chimney-top.—
All unembowered
And naked stood that lowly Parsonage
(For such in truth it is, and appertains
To a small Chapel in the vale beyond)
When hither came its last Inhabitant.
Rough and forbidding were the choicest roads
By which our northern wilds could then be crossed ;
And into most of these secluded vales
Was no access for wain, heavy or light.
So, at his dwelling-place the Priest arrived
With store of household goods, in panniers slung
On sturdy horses graced with jingling bells,
And on the back of more ignoble beast ;
That, with like burthen of effects most prized
Or easiest carried, closed the motley train.
Young was I then, a school-boy of eight years ;
But still, methinks, I see them as they passed
In order, drawing toward their wished-for home.
—Rocked by the motion of a trusty ass
Two ruddy children hung, a well-poised freight,

Each in his basket nodding drowsily ;
Their bonnets, I remember, wreathed with flowers,
Which told it was the pleasant month of June ;
And, close behind, the comely Matron rode,
A woman of soft speech and gracious smile,
And with a lady's mien.—From far they came,
Even from Northumbrian hills ; yet theirs had been
A merry journey, rich in pastime, cheered
By music, prank, and laughter-stirring jest ;
And freak put on, and arch word dropped—to swell
The cloud of fancy and uncouth surmise
That gathered round the slowly-moving train.
—'Whence do they come? and with what errand charged?
'Belong they to the fortune-telling tribe
'Who pitch their tents under the green-wood tree?
'Or Strollers are they, furnished to enact
'Fair Rosamond, and the Children of the Wood,
'And, by that whiskered tabby's aid, set forth
'The lucky venture of sage Whittington,
'When the next village hears the show announced
'By blast of trumpet?' Plenteous was the growth
Of such conjectures, overheard, or seen
On many a staring countenance portrayed
Of boor or burgher, as they marched along.
And more than once their steadiness of face
Was put to proof, and exercise supplied
To their inventive humour, by stern looks,
And questions in authoritative tone,
From some staid guardian of the public peace,
Checking the sober steed on which he rode,
In his suspicious wisdom ; oftener still,

By notice indirect, or blunt demand
From traveller halting in his own despite,
A simple curiosity to ease :
Of which adventures, that beguiled and cheered
Their grave migration, the good pair would tell,
With undiminished glee, in hoary age.

A Priest he was by function ; but his course
From his youth up, and high as manhood's noon,
(The hour of life to which he then was brought)
Had been irregular, I might say, wild ;
By books unsteadied, by his pastoral care
Too little checked. An active, ardent mind ;
A fancy pregnant with resource and scheme
To cheat the sadness of a rainy day ;
Hands apt for all ingenious arts and games ;
A generous spirit, and a body strong
To cope with stoutest champions of the bowl ;
Had earned for him sure welcome, and the rights
Of a prized visitant, in the jolly hall
Of country 'squire ; or at the statelier board
Of duke or earl, from scenes of courtly pomp
Withdrawn,—to while away the summer hours
In condescension among rural guests.

With these high comrades he had revelled long,
Frolicked industriously, a simple Clerk
By hopes of coming patronage beguiled
Till the heart sickened. So, each loftier aim
Abandoning and all his showy friends,
For a life's stay (slender it was, but sure)
He turned to this secluded chapelry ;

That had been offered to his doubtful choice
By an unthought-of patron. Bleak and bare
They found the cottage, their allotted home;
Naked without, and rude within; a spot
With which the Cure not long had been endowed:
And far remote the chapel stood,—remote,
And, from his Dwelling, unapproachable,
Save through a gap high in the hills, an opening
Shadeless and shelterless, by driving showers
Frequented, and beset with howling winds.
Yet cause was none, whate'er regret might hang
On his own mind, to quarrel with the choice
Or the necessity that fixed him here;
Apart from old temptations, and constrained
To punctual labour in his sacred charge.
See him a constant preacher to the poor!
And visiting, though not with saintly zeal,
Yet, when need was, with no reluctant will,
The sick in body, or distrest in mind;
And, by as salutary change, compelled
To rise from timely sleep, and meet the day
With no engagement, in his thoughts, more proud
Or splendid than his garden could afford,
His fields, or mountains by the heath-cock ranged,
Or the wild brooks; from which he now returned
Contented to partake the quiet meal
Of his own board, where sat his gentle Mate
And three fair Children, plentifully fed
Though simply, from their little household farm;
Nor wanted timely treat of fish or fowl
By Nature yielded to his practised hand;—
To help the small but certain comings-in

Of that spare benefice. Yet not the less
Theirs was a hospitable board, and theirs
A charitable door.

So days and years
Passed on ;—the inside of that rugged house
Was trimmed and brightened by the Matron's care,
And gradually enriched with things of price,
Which might be lacked for use or ornament.
What, though no soft and costly sofa there
Insidiously stretched out its lazy length,
And no vain mirror glittered upon the walls,
Yet were the windows of the low abode
By shutters weather-fended, which at once
Repelled the storm and deadened its loud roar.
There snow-white curtains hung in decent folds ;
Tough moss, and long-enduring mountain plants,
That creep along the ground with sinuous trail,
Were nicely braided ; and composed a work
Like Indian mats, that with appropriate grace
Lay at the threshold and the inner doors ;
And a fair carpet, woven of homespun wool
But tinctured daintily with florid hues,
For seemliness and warmth, on festal days,
Covered the smooth blue slabs of mountain-stone
With which the parlour-floor, in simplest guise
Of pastoral homesteads, had been long inlaid.

Those pleasing works the Housewife's skill produced :
Meanwhile the unsedentary Master's hand
Was busier with his task—to rid, to plant,
To rear for food, for shelter, and delight ;
A thriving covert ! And when wishes, formed

In youth, and sanctioned by the riper mind,
Restored me to my native valley, here
To end my days ; well pleased was I to see
The once-bare cottage, on the mountain-side,
Screen'd from assault of every bitter blast ;
While the dark shadows of the summer leaves
Danced in the breeze, chequering its mossy roof.
Time, which had thus afforded willing help
To beautify with Nature's fairest growths
This rustic tenement, had gently shed,
Upon its Master's frame, a wintry grace ;
The comeliness of unenfeebled age.

But how could I say, gently ? for he still
Retained a flashing eye, a burning palm,
A stirring foot, a head which beat at nights
Upon its pillow with a thousand schemes.
Few likings had he dropped, few pleasures lost ;
Generous and charitable, prompt to serve ;
And still his harsher passions kept their hold—
Anger and indignation. Still he loved
The sound of titled names, and talked in glee
Of long-past banquetings with high-born friends :
Then, from those lulling fits of vain delight
Uproused by recollected injury, railed
At their false ways disdainfully,—and oft
In bitterness, and with a threatening eye
Of fire, incensed beneath its hoary brow.
—Those transports, with staid looks of pure good-will,
And with soft smile, his consort would reprove.
She, far behind him in the race of years,
Yet keeping her first mildness, was advanced

Far nearer, in the habit of her soul,
To that still region whither all are bound.
Him might we liken to the setting sun
As seen not seldom on some gusty day,
Struggling and bold, and shining from the west
With an inconstant and unmellowed light ;
She was a soft attendant cloud, that hung
As if with wish to veil the restless orb ;
From which it did itself imbibe a ray
Of pleasing lustre.—But no more of this ;
I better love to sprinkle on the sod
That now divides the pair, or rather say,
That still unites them, praises, like heaven's dew,
Without reserve descending upon both.

Our very first in eminence of years
This old Man stood, the patriarch of the Vale !
And, to his unmolested mansion, death
Had never come, through space of forty years ;
Sparing both old and young in that abode.
Suddenly then they disappeared : not twice
Had summer scorched the fields ; not twice had fallen,
On those high peaks, the first autumnal snow,
Before the greedy visiting was closed,
And the long-privileged house left empty—swept
As by a plague. Yet no rapacious plague
Had been among them ; all was gentle death,
One after one, with intervals of peace.
A happy consummation ! an accord
Sweet, perfect, to be wished for ! save that here
Was something which to mortal sense might sound
Like harshness,—that the old grey-headed Sire,

The oldest, he was taken last, survived
When the meek Partner of his age, his Son,
His Daughter, and that late and high-prized gift,
His little smiling Grandchild, were no more.

'All gone, all vanished! he deprived and bare,
'How will he face the remnant of his life?
'What will become of him?' we said, and mused
In sad conjectures—'Shall we meet him now
'Haunting with rod and line the craggy brooks?
'Or shall we overhear him, as we pass,
'Striving to entertain the lonely hours
'With music?' (for he had not ceased to touch
The harp or viol which himself had framed,
For their sweet purposes, with perfect skill.)
'What titles will he keep? will he remain
'Musician, gardener, builder, mechanist,
'A planter, and a rearer from the seed?
'A man of hope and forward-looking mind
'Even to the last!'—Such was he, unsubdued.
But Heaven was gracious; yet a little while,
And this Survivor, with his cheerful throng
Of open projects, and his inward hoard
Of unsunned griefs, too many and too keen,
Was overcome by unexpected sleep,
In one blest moment. Like a shadow thrown
Softly and lightly from a passing cloud,
Death fell upon him, while reclined he lay
For noontide solace on the summer grass,
The warm lap of his mother earth: and so,
Their lenient term of separation past,
That family (whose graves you there behold)

By yet a higher privilege once more
Were gathered to each other."

The Excursion, Bk. VII. l. 31.
Between 1795–1814.

XXXI

LAODAMIA

"With sacrifice before the rising morn
Vows have I made by fruitless hope inspired ;
And from the infernal Gods, 'mid shades forlorn
Of night, my slaughtered Lord have I required :
Celestial pity I again implore ;—
Restore him to my sight—great Jove, restore !"

So speaking, and by fervent love endowed,
With faith, the Suppliant heavenward lifts her hands ;
While, like the sun emerging from a cloud,
Her countenance brightens—and her eye expands ;
Her bosom heaves and spreads, her stature grows ;
And she expects the issue in repose.

O terror ! what hath she perceived ?—O joy !
What doth she look on ?—whom doth she behold ?
Her Hero slain upon the beach of Troy ?
His vital presence ? his corporeal mould ?
It is—if sense deceive her not—'tis He !
And a God leads him, winged Mercury !

Mild Hermes spake—and touched her with his wand
That calms all fear ; "Such grace hath crowned thy prayer,

Laodamía ! that at Jove's command
Thy Husband walks the paths of upper air :
He comes to tarry with thee three hours' space ;
Accept the gift, behold him face to face ! "

Forth sprang the impassioned Queen her Lord to clasp ;
Again that consummation she essayed ;
But unsubstantial Form eludes her grasp
As often as that eager grasp was made.
The Phantom parts—but parts to re-unite,
And re-assume his place before her sight.

" Protesiláus, lo ! thy guide is gone !
Confirm, I pray, the vision with thy voice :
This is our palace,—yonder is thy throne ;
Speak, and the floor thou tread'st on will rejoice.
Not to appal me have the gods bestowed
This precious boon ; and blest a sad abode."

" Great Jove, Laodamía ; doth not leave
His gifts imperfect :—Spectre though I be,
I am not sent to scare thee or deceive ;
But in reward of thy fidelity.
And something also did my worth obtain ;
For fearless virtue bringeth boundless gain.

Thou knowest, the Delphic oracle foretold
That the first Greek who touched the Trojan strand
Should die ; but me the threat could not withhold :
A generous cause a victim did demand ;
And forth I leapt upon the sandy plain ;
A self-devoted chief—by Hector slain."

"Supreme of Heroes—bravest, noblest, best!
Thy matchless courage I bewail no more,
Which then, when tens of thousands were deprest
By doubt, propelled thee to the fatal shore:
Thou found'st—and I forgive thee—here thou art—
A nobler counsellor than my poor heart.

But thou, though capable of sternest deed,
Were kind as resolute, and good as brave;
And he, whose power restores thee, hath decreed
Thou should'st elude the malice of the grave:
Redundant are thy locks, thy lips as fair
As when their breath enriched Thessalian air.

No Spectre greets me,—no vain Shadow this;
Come, blooming Hero, place thee by my side!
Give, on this well-known couch, one nuptial kiss
To me, this day, a second time thy bride!"
Jove frowned in heaven: the conscious Parcæ threw
Upon those roseate lips a Stygian hue.

"This visage tells thee that my doom is past:
Nor should the change be mourned, even if the joys
Of sense were able to return as fast
And surely as they vanish. Earth destroys
Those raptures duly—Erebus disdains:
Calm pleasures there abide—majestic pains.

Be taught, O faithful Consort, to control
Rebellious passion: for the Gods approve
The depth, and not the tumult, of the soul;
A fervent, not ungovernable, love.
Thy transports moderate; and meekly mourn
When I depart, for brief is my sojourn—"

"Ah, wherefore?—Did not Hercules by force
Wrest from the guardian Monster of the tomb
Alcestis, a reanimated corse,
Given back to dwell on earth in vernal bloom?
Medea's spells dispersed the weight of years,
And Æson stood a youth 'mid youthful peers.

The Gods to us are merciful—and they
Yet further may relent: for mightier far
Than strength of nerve and sinew, or the sway
Of magic potent over sun and star,
Is love, though oft to agony distrest,
And though his favourite seat be feeble woman's breast.

But if thou goest, I follow—" "Peace!" he said,—
She looked upon him and was calmed and cheered;
The ghastly colour from his lips had fled;
In his deportment, shape, and mien, appeared
Elysian beauty, melancholy grace,
Brought from a pensive though a happy place.

He spake of love, such love as Spirits feel
In worlds whose course is equable and pure;
No fears to beat away—no strife to heal—
The past unsighed for, and the future sure;
Spake of heroic arts in graver mood
Revived, with finer harmony pursued;

Of all that is most beauteous—imaged there
In happier beauty; more pellucid streams,
An ampler ether, a diviner air,
And fields invested with purpureal gleams;
Climes which the sun, who sheds the brightest day
Earth knows, is all unworthy to survey.

Yet there the Soul shall enter which hath earned
That privilege by virtue.—"Ill," said he,
"The end of man's existence I discerned,
Who from ignoble games and revelry
Could draw, when we had parted, vain delight,
While tears were thy best pastime, day and night;

And while my youthful peers before my eyes
(Each hero following his peculiar bent)
Prepared themselves for glorious enterprise
By martial sports,—or, seated in the tent,
Chieftains and kings in council were detained;
What time the fleet at Aulis lay enchained.

The wished-for wind was given:—I then revolved
The oracle, upon the silent sea;
And, if no worthier led the way, resolved
That, of a thousand vessels, mine should be
The foremost prow in pressing to the strand,—
Mine the first blood that tinged the Trojan sand.

Yet bitter, oft-times bitter, was the pang
When of thy loss I thought, beloved Wife!
On thee too fondly did my memory hang,
And on the joys we shared in mortal life,—
The paths which we had trod—these fountains, flowers;
My new-planned cities, and unfinished towers.

But should suspense permit the Foe to cry,
'Behold they tremble!—haughty their array,
Yet of their number no one dares to die?'
In soul I swept the indignity away:
Old frailties then recurred:—but lofty thought,
In act embodied, my deliverance wrought.

And Thou, though strong in love, art all too weak
In reason, in self-government too slow ;
I counsel thee by fortitude to seek
Our blest re-union in the shades below.
The invisible world with thee hath sympathised ;
Be thy affections raised and solemnised.

Learn, by a mortal yearning, to ascend—
Seeking a higher object. Love was given,
Encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for that end ;
For this the passion to excess was driven—
That self might be annulled : her bondage prove
The fetters of a dream, opposed to love."——

Aloud she shrieked ! for Hermes re-appears !
Round the dear Shade she would have clung—'tis vain :
The hours are past—too brief had they been years ;
And him no mortal effort can detain :
Swift, toward the realms that know not earthly day,
He through the portal takes his silent way,
And on the palace-floor a lifeless corse She lay.

Thus, all in vain exhorted and reproved,
She perished ; and, as for a wilful crime,
By the just Gods whom no weak pity moved,
Was doomed to wear out her appointed time,
Apart from happy Ghosts, that gather flowers
Of blissful quiet 'mid unfading bowers.

—Yet tears to human suffering are due ;
And mortal hopes defeated and o'erthrown
Are mourned by man, and not by man alone,
As fondly he believes.—Upon the side

Of Hellespont (such faith was entertained)
A knot of spiry trees for ages grew
From out the tomb of him for whom she died ;
And ever, when such stature they had gained
That Ilium's walls were subject to their view,
The trees' tall summits withered at the sight ;
A constant interchange of growth and blight ! *

1814.

* For the account of these long-lived trees, see Pliny's *Natural History*, lib. xvi. cap. 44 ; and for the features in the character of Protesilaus see the *Iphigenia in Aulis* of Euripides. Vergil places the Shade of Laodamia in a mournful region, among unhappy Lovers,

———His Laodamia
It Comes.———

PART III

REFLECTIVE POEMS

XXXII

CHARACTER OF THE HAPPY WARRIOR

WHO is the happy Warrior? Who is he
That every man in arms should wish to be?
—It is the generous Spirit, who, when brought
Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought
Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought:
Whose high endeavours are an inward light
That makes the path before him always bright:
Who, with a natural instinct to discern
What knowledge can perform, is diligent to learn;
Abides by this resolve, and stops not there,
But makes his moral being his prime care;
Who, doomed to go in company with Pain,
And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable train!
Turns his necessity to glorious gain;
In face of these doth exercise a power
Which is our human nature's highest dower;
Controls them and subdues, transmutes, bereaves
Of their bad influence, and their good receives:

By objects, which might force the soul to abate
Her feeling, rendered more compassionate;
Is placable—because occasions rise
So often that demand such sacrifice;
More skilful in self-knowledge, even more pure,
As tempted more; more able to endure,
As more exposed to suffering and distress;
Thence, also, more alive to tenderness.
—'Tis he whose law is reason; who depends
Upon that law as on the best of friends;
Whence, in a state where men are tempted still
To evil for a guard against worse ill,
And what in quality or act is best
Doth seldom on a right foundation rest,
He labours good on good to fix, and owes
To virtue every triumph that he knows:
—Who, if he rise to station of command,
Rises by open means; and there will stand
On honourable terms, or else retire,
And in himself possess his own desire;
Who comprehends his trust, and to the same
Keeps faithful with a singleness of aim;
And therefore does not stoop, nor lie in wait
For wealth, or honours, or for worldly state;
Whom they must follow; on whose head must fall,
Like showers of manna, if they come at all:
Whose powers shed round him in the common strife,
Or mild concerns of ordinary life,
A constant influence, a peculiar grace;
But who, if he be called upon to face
Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined
Great issues, good or bad for human kind,

Is happy as a Lover; and attired
With sudden brightness, like a Man inspired;
And, through the heat of conflict, keeps the law
In calmness made, and sees what he foresaw;
Or if an unexpected call succeed,
Come when it will, is equal to the need:
—He who, though thus endued as with a sense
And faculty for storm and turbulence,
Is yet a Soul whose master-bias leans
To homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes;
Sweet images! which, wheresoe'er he be,
Are at his heart; and such fidelity
It is his darling passion to approve;
More brave for this, that he hath much to love:—
'Tis, finally, the Man, who, lifted high,
Conspicuous object in a Nation's eye,
Or left unthought-of in obscurity,—
Who, with a toward or untoward lot,
Prosperous or adverse, to his wish or not—
Plays, in the many games of life, that one
Where what he most doth value must be won:
Whom neither shape of danger can dismay,
Nor thought of tender happiness betray;
Who, not content that former worth stand fast,
Looks forward, persevering to the last,
From well to better, daily self-surpast:
Who, whether praise of him must walk the earth
For ever, and to noble deeds give birth,
Or he must fall, to sleep without his fame,
And leave a dead unprofitable name—
Finds comfort in himself and in his cause;
And, while the mortal mist is gathering, draws

His breath in confidence of Heaven's applause :
This is the happy Warrior ; this is He
That every Man in arms should wish to be.

1806.

XXXIII

ELEGIAC STANZAS,

SUGGESTED BY A PICTURE OF PEELE CASTLE, IN A STORM, PAINTED BY SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT

I WAS thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile !
Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee :
I saw thee every day ; and all the while
Thy Form was sleeping on a glassy sea.

So pure the sky, so quiet was the air !
So like, so very like, was day to day !
Whene'er I looked, thy Image still was there ;
It trembled, but it never passed away.

How perfect was the calm ! it seemed no sleep ;
No mood, which season takes away, or brings :
I could have fancied that the mighty Deep
Was even the gentlest of all gentle Things.

Ah ! THEN, if mine had been the Painter's hand,
To express what then I saw ; and add the gleam,
The light that never was, on sea or land,
The consecration, and the Poet's dream ;

I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile,
Amid a world how different from this !

Beside a sea that could not cease to smile;
On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss.

Thou shouldst have seemed a treasure-house divine
Of peaceful years; a chronicle of heaven;—
Of all the sunbeams that did ever shine
The very sweetest had to thee been given.

A Picture had it been of lasting ease,
Elysian quiet, without toil or strife;
No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,
Or merely silent Nature's breathing life.

Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,
Such Picture would I at that time have made:
And seen the soul of truth in every part,
A stedfast peace that might not be betrayed.

So once it would have been,—'tis so no more;
I have submitted to a new control:
A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
A deep distress hath humanised my Soul.

Not for a moment could I now behold
A smiling sea, and be what I have been:
The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old;
This, which I know, I speak with mind serene.

Then, Beaumont, Friend! who would have been the
Friend,
If he had lived, of Him whom I deplore,
This work of thine I blame not, but commend;
This sea in anger, and that dismal shore.

O 'tis a passionate Work !—yet wise and well,
Well chosen is the spirit that is here ;
That Hulk which labours in the deadly swell,
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear !

And this huge Castle, standing here sublime,
I love to see the look with which it braves,
Cased in the unfeeling armour of old time,
The lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling waves.

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind !
Such happiness, wherever it be known,
Is to be pitied ; for 'tis surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
And frequent sights of what is to be borne !
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here.—
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

1805.

XXXIV

INFLUENCE OF NATURAL OBJECTS

IN CALLING FORTH AND STRENGTHENING THE IMAGINATION IN BOYHOOD AND EARLY YOUTH

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe !
Thou Soul, that art the Eternity of thought !
And giv'st to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion ! not in vain,

By day or star-light, thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul;
Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man;
But with high objects, with enduring things,
With life and nature; purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying by such discipline
Both pain and fear,—until we recognise
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapours rolling down the valleys made
A lonely scene more lonesome; among woods
At noon; and mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling lake,
Beneath the gloomy hills, homeward I went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine:
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
And by the waters, all the summer long.
And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and, visible for many a mile,
The cottage-windows through the twilight blazed,
I heeded not the summons: happy time
It was indeed for all of us; for me
It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud
The village-clock tolled six—I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home.—All shod with steel
We hissed along the polished ice, in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase

And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
The pack loud-chiming, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle: with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while far-distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy, not unnoticed while the stars,
Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.
Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the reflex of a star;
Image, that, flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the glassy plain: and oftentimes,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round!
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a summer sea.

1799.

XXXV

IMAGINATION AND TASTE, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED

O Soul of Nature! excellent and fair!
That didst rejoice with me, with whom I, too,
Rejoiced through early youth, before the winds
And roaring waters, and in lights and shades
That marched and countermarched about the hills
In glorious apparition, Powers on whom
I daily waited, now all eye and now
All ear; but never long without the heart
Employed, and man's unfolding intellect:
O Soul of Nature! that, by laws divine
Sustained and governed, still dost overflow
With an impassioned life, what feeble ones
Walk on this earth! how feeble have I been
When thou wert in thy strength! Nor this through stroke
Of human suffering, such as justifies
Remissness and inaptitude of mind,
But through presumption; even in pleasure pleased
Unworthily, disliking here, and there
Liking; by rules of mimic art transferred
To things above all art; but more,—for this,
Although a strong infection of the age,
Was never much my habit—giving way
To a comparison of scene with scene,
Bent overmuch on superficial things,
Pampering myself with meagre novelties
Of colour and proportion; to the moods

Of time and season, to the moral power,
The affections and the spirit of the place,
Insensible. Nor only did the love
Of sitting thus in judgment interrupt
My deeper feelings, but another cause,
More subtle and less easily explained,
That almost seems inherent in the creature,
A twofold frame of body and of mind.
I speak in recollection of a time
When the bodily eye, in every stage of life
The most despotic of our senses, gained
Such strength in *me* as often held my mind
In absolute dominion. Gladly here,
Entering upon abstruser argument,
Could I endeavour to unfold the means
Which Nature studiously employs to thwart
This tyranny, summons all the senses each
To counteract the other, and themselves,
And makes them all, and the objects with which all
Are conversant, subservient in their turn
To the great ends of Liberty and Power.
But leave we this : enough that my delights
(Such as they were) were sought insatiably.
Vivid the transport, vivid though not profound ;
I roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock,
Still craving combinations of new forms,
New pleasure, wider empire for the sight,
Proud of her own endowments, and rejoiced
To lay the inner faculties asleep.
Amid the turns and counterturns, the strife
And various trials of our complex being,
As we grow up, such thraldom of that sense

Seems hard to shun. And yet I knew a maid,
A young enthusiast, who escaped these bonds;
Her eye was not the mistress of her heart;
Far less did rules prescribed by passive taste,
Or barren intermeddling subtleties,
Perplex her mind; but, wise as women are
When genial circumstance hath favoured them,
She welcomed what was given, and craved no more;
Whate'er the scene presented to her view
That was the best, to that she was attuned
By her benign simplicity of life,
And through a perfect happiness of soul,
Whose variegated feelings were in this
Sisters, that they were each some new delight.
Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green field,
Could they have known her, would have loved; methought
Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,
That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,
And every thing she looked on, should have had
An intimation how she bore herself
Towards them and to all creatures. God delights
In such a being; for, her common thoughts
Are piety, her life is gratitude.

Even like this maid, before I was called forth
From the retirement of my native hills,
I loved whate'er I saw: nor lightly loved,
But most intensely; never dreamt of aught
More grand, more fair, more exquisitely framed
Than those few nooks to which my happy feet
Were limited. I had not at that time
Lived long enough, nor in the least survived

The first diviner influence of this world,
As it appears to unaccustomed eyes.
Worshipping them among the depth of things,
As piety ordained ; could I submit
To measured admiration, or to aught
That should preclude humility and love ?
I felt, observed, and pondered ; did not judge,
Yea, never thought of judging ; with the gift
Of all this glory filled and satisfied.
And afterwards, when through the gorgeous Alps
Roaming, I carried with me the same heart :
In truth, the degradation—howsoe'er
Induced, effect, in whatsoe'er degree,
Of custom that prepares a partial scale
In which the little oft outweighs the great ;
Or any other cause that hath been named ;
Or lastly, aggravated by the times
And their impassioned sounds, which well might make
The milder minstrelsies of rural scenes
Inaudible—was transient ; I had known
Too forcibly, too early in my life,
Visitings of imaginative power
For this to last : I shook the habit off
Entirely and for ever, and again
In Nature's presence stood, as now I stand,
A sensitive being, a *creative* soul.

There are in our existence spots of time,
That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence, depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,

In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired ;
A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
That penetrates, enables us to mount,
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
Among those passages of life that give
Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how,
The mind is lord and master—outward sense
The obedient servant of her will. Such moments
Are scattered everywhere, taking their date
From our first childhood. I remember well,
That once, while yet my inexperienced hand
Could scarcely hold a bridle, with proud hopes
I mounted, and we journeyed towards the hills :
An ancient servant of my father's house
Was with me, my encourager and guide :
We had not travelled long, ere some mischance
Disjoined me from my comrade ; and, through fear
Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor
I led my horse, and, stumbling on, at length
Came to a bottom, where in former times
A murderer had been hung in iron chains.
The gibbet-mast had mouldered down, the bones
And iron case were gone ; but on the turf,
Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought,
Some unknown hand had carved the murderer's name.
The monumental letters were inscribed
In times long past ; but still, from year to year,
By superstition of this neighbourhood,
The grass is cleared away, and to this hour

The characters are fresh and visible :
A casual glance had shown them, and I fled,
Faltering and faint, and ignorant of the road :
Then, reascending the bare common, saw
A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,
The beacon on the summit, and, more near,
A girl, who bore a pitcher on her head,
And seemed with difficult steps to force her way
Against the blowing wind. It was, in truth,
An ordinary sight ; but I should need
Colours and words that are unknown to man,
To paint the visionary dreariness
Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,
Invested moorland waste, and naked pool,
The beacon crowning the lone eminence,
The female and her garments vexed and tossed
By the strong wind. When, in the blessed hours
Of early love, the loved one at my side,
I roamed, in daily presence of this scene,
Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,
And on the melancholy beacon, fell
A spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam ;
And think ye not with radiance more sublime
For these remembrances, and for the power
They had left behind ? So feeling comes in aid
Of feeling, and diversity of strength
Attends us, if but once we have been strong.
Oh ! mystery of man, from what a depth
Proceed thy honours. I am lost, but see
In simple childhood something of the base
On which thy greatness stands ; but this I feel,
That from thyself it comes, that thou must give,

Else never canst receive. The days gone by
Return upon me almost from the dawn
Of life : the hiding-places of man's power
Open ; I would approach them, but they close.
I see by glimpses now ; when age comes on,
May scarcely see at all ; and I would give,
While yet we may, as far as words can give,
Substance and life to what I feel, enshrining,
Such is my hope, the spirit of the Past
For future restoration.—Yet another
Of these memorials :—
One Christmas-time,
On the glad eve of its dear holidays,
Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth
Into the fields, impatient for the sight
Of those led palfreys that should bear us home ;
My brothers and myself. There rose a crag,
That, from the meeting-point of two highways
Ascending, overlooked them both, far stretched ;
Thither, uncertain on which road to fix
My expectation, thither I repaired,
Scout-like, and gained the summit ; 'twas a day
Tempestuous, dark, and wild, and on the grass
I sate half-sheltered by a naked wall ;
Upon my right hand couched a single sheep,
Upon my left a blasted hawthorn stood ;
With those companions at my side, I watched,
Straining my eyes intensely, as the mist
Gave intermitting prospect of the copse
And plain beneath. Ere we to school returned,—
That dreary time,—ere we had been ten days
Sojourners in my father's house, he died,

And I and my three brothers, orphans then,
Followed his body to the grave. The event,
With all the sorrow that it brought, appeared
A chastisement; and when I called to mind
That day so lately past, when from the crag
I looked in such anxiety of hope;
With trite reflections of morality,
Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low
To God, Who thus corrected my desires;
And, afterwards, the wind and sleety rain,
And all the business of the elements,
The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
And the bleak music from that old stone wall,
The noise of wood and water, and the mist
That on the line of each of those two roads
Advanced in such indisputable shapes;
All these were kindred spectacles and sounds
To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink,
As at a fountain; and on winter nights,
Down to this very time, when storm and rain
Beat on my roof, or, haply, at noon-day,
While in a grove I walk, whose lofty trees,
Laden with summer's thickest foliage, rock
In a strong wind, some working of the spirit,
Some inward agitations thence are brought,
Whate'er their office, whether to beguile
Thoughts over busy in the course they took,
Or animate an hour of vacant ease.

The Prelude, Book XII. l. 93.
1805.

XXXVI

"ON MAN, ON NATURE, AND ON HUMAN LIFE"

"On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,
Musing in solitude, I oft perceive
Fair trains of imagery before me rise,
Accompanied by feelings of delight
Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed;
And I am conscious of affecting thoughts
And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes
Or elevates the Mind, intent to weigh
The good and evil of our mortal state.
—To these emotions, whencesoe'er they come,
Whether from breath of outward circumstance,
Or from the Soul—an impulse to herself—
I would give utterance in numerous verse.
Of Truth, of Grandeur, Beauty, Love, and Hope,
And melancholy Fear subdued by Faith;
Of blessed consolations in distress;
Of moral strength, and intellectual Power;
Of joy in widest commonalty spread;
Of the individual Mind that keeps her own
Inviolate retirement, subject there
To Conscience only, and the law supreme
Of that Intelligence which governs all—
I sing:—'fit audience let me find though few!'

So prayed, more gaining than he asked, the Bard—
In holiest mood. Urania, I shall need
Thy guidance, or a greater Muse, if such

Descend to earth or dwell in highest heaven!
For I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink
Deep—and, aloft ascending, breathe in worlds
To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.
All strength—all terror, single or in bands,
That ever was put forth in personal form—
Jehovah—with his thunder, and the choir
Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal thrones—
I pass them unalarmed. Not Chaos, not
The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,
Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out
By help of dreams—can breed such fear and awe
As fall upon us often when we look
Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man—
My haunt, and the main region of my song.
—Beauty—a living Presence of the earth,
Surpassing the most fair ideal Forms
Which craft of delicate Spirits hath composed
From earth's materials—waits upon my steps;
Pitches her tents before me as I move,
An hourly neighbour. Paradise, and groves
Elysian, Fortunate Fields—like those of old
Sought in the Atlantic Main—why should they be
A history only of departed things,
Or a mere fiction of what never was?
For the discerning intellect of Man,
When wedded to this goodly universe
In love and holy passion, shall find these
A simple produce of the common day.
—I, long before the blissful hour arrives,
Would chant, in lonely peace, the spousal verse
Of this great consummation:—and, by words

Which speak of nothing more than what we are,
Would I arouse the sensual from their sleep
Of Death, and win the vacant and the vain
To noble raptures; while my voice proclaims
How exquisitely the individual Mind
(And the progressive powers perhaps no less
Of the whole species) to the external World
Is fitted:—and how exquisitely, too—
Theme this but little heard of among men—
The external World is fitted to the Mind;
And the creation (by no lower name
Can it be called) which they with blended might
Accomplish:—this is our high argument.
—Such grateful haunts foregoing, if I oft
Must turn elsewhere—to travel near the tribes
And fellowships of men, and see ill sights
Of madding passions mutually inflamed;
Must hear Humanity in fields and groves
Pipe solitary anguish; or must hang
Brooding above the fierce confederate storm
Of sorrow, barricaded evermore
Within the walls of cities—may these sounds
Have their authentic comment; that even these
Hearing, I be not downcast or forlorn!—
Descend, prophetic Spirit! that inspir'st
The human Soul of universal earth,
Dreaming on things to come; and dost possess
A metropolitan temple in the hearts
Of mighty Poets: upon me bestow
A gift of genuine insight; that my Song
With star-like virtue in its place may shine,
Shedding benignant influence, and secure,

Itself, from all malevolent effect
Of those mutations that extend their sway
Throughout the nether sphere !—And if with this
I mix more lowly matter ; with the thing
Contemplated, describe the Mind and Man
Contemplating ; and who, and what he was—
The transitory Being that beheld
This Vision ; when and where, and how he lived ;—
Be not this labour useless. If such theme
May sort with highest objects, then—dread Power !
Whose gracious favour is the primal source
Of all illumination—may my Life
Express the image of a better time,
More wise desires, and simpler manners ;—nurse
My Heart in genuine freedom :—all pure thoughts
Be with me ;—so shall thy unfailing love
Guide, and support, and cheer me to the end !'

The Recluse. Concluding passage.
About 1800.

XXXVII

LINES,

COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY, ON REVISITING THE BANKS OF THE WYE DURING A TOUR

JULY 13, 1798

FIVE years have past ; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters ! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs

With a soft inland murmur.*—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion ; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild : these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door ; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees !
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye :
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart ;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration :—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure : such, perhaps,

* The river is not affected by the tides a few miles above Tintern.

As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened :—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul :
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.
If this
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh ! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight ; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye ! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee !

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again :

While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompence. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man :
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains ; and of all that we behold
From this green earth ; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,*
And what perceive ; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.
Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay :
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river ; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend ; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh ! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister ! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray

* This line has a close resemblance to an admirable line of Young's the exact expression of which I do not recollect.

The heart that loved her ; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy : for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk ;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee : and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure ; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies ; oh ! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations ! Nor, perchance—
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together ; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service : rather say
With warmer love—oh ! with far deeper zeal

Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

1798.

PART IV

ODES AND SONNETS

XXXVIII

ODE

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

"The Child is Father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety."

I

THERE was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
Turn whereso'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

II

The Rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the Rose,
The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare,
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

III

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong:
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,
The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every Beast keep holiday;—
Thou Child of Joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
Shepherd-boy!

IV

Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make ; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee ;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.
Oh evil day ! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May-morning,
And the Children are culling
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers ; while the sun shines warm,
And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm :—
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear !
—But there's a Tree, of many, one,
A single Field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone :
The Pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat :
Whither is fled the visionary gleam ?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream ?

V

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar :
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,

But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home :
Heaven lies about us in our infancy !
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy ;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended ;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

VI

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own ;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a Mother's mind,
And no unworthy aim,
The homely Nurse doth all she can
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

VII

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' Darling of a pigmy size !
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes !
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,

Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learned art ;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral ;
And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song :
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife ;
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little Actor cons another part ;
Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage ;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation.

VIII

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy Soul's immensity ;
Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—
Mighty Prophet ! Seer blest !
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave ;
Thou, over whom thy Immortality
Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,
A Presence which is not to be put by ;

Thou little child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

IX

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!

The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest;
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast:—
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realised,
High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,

Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our Souls have sight of an immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the Children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

X

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young Lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;

In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be ;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering ;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

XI

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves !
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might ;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they ;
The innocent brightness of a new-born Day
Is lovely yet ;
The Clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality ;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

1803–6.

XXXIX

ODE TO DUTY

"Jam non consilio bonus, sed more eò perductus, ut non tantum rectè facere possim, sed nisi rectè facere non possim."

STERN Daughter of the Voice of God!
O Duty! if that name thou love
Who art a light to guide, a rod
To check the erring, and reprove;
Thou, who art victory and law
When empty terrors overawe;
From vain temptations dost set free;
And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity!

There are who ask not if thine eye
Be on them; who, in love and truth,
Where no misgiving is, rely
Upon the genial sense of youth:
Glad Hearts! without reproach or blot;
Who do thy work, and know it not:
Oh! if through confidence misplaced
They fail, thy saving arms, dread Power! around them cast.

Serene will be our days and bright,
And happy will our nature be,
When love is an unerring light,
And joy its own security.
And they a blissful course may hold
Even now, who, not unwisely bold,
Live in the spirit of this creed;
Yet seek thy firm support, according to their need.

I, loving freedom, and untried ;
No sport of every random gust,
Yet being to myself a guide,
Too blindly have reposed my trust :
And oft, when in my heart was heard
Thy timely mandate, I deferred
The task, in smoother walks to stray ;
But thee I now would serve more strictly, if I may.

Through no disturbance of my soul,
Or strong compunction in me wrought,
I supplicate for thy control ;
But in the quietness of thought :
Me this unchartered freedom tires ;
I feel the weight of chance-desires :
My hopes no more must change their name,
I long for a repose that ever is the same.

Stern Lawgiver ! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace ;
Nor know we any thing so fair
As is the smile upon thy face :
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds
And fragrance in thy footing treads ;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong ;
And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are fresh
and strong.

To humbler functions, awful Power !
I call thee : I myself commend
Unto thy guidance from this hour ;
Oh, let my weakness have an end !

Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice;
The confidence of reason give;
And in the light of truth thy Bondman let me live!

1805.

XL

TO SLEEP

A FLOCK of sheep that leisurely pass by,
One after one; the sound of rain, and bees
Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,
Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky;
I have thought of all by turns, and yet do lie
Sleepless! and soon the small birds' melodies
Must hear, first uttered from my orchard trees;
And the first cuckoo's melancholy cry.
Even thus last night, and two nights more, I lay,
And could not win thee, Sleep! by any stealth:
So do not let me wear to-night away:
Without Thee what is all the morning's wealth?
Come, blessed barrier between day and day,
Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health!

1806.

XLI

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

SEPT. 3, 1802.

EARTH has not any thing to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by

A sight so touching in its majesty :
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning ; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky ;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill ;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !
The river glideth at his own sweet will :
Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep ;
And all that mighty heart is lying still !

July 30th, 1802.

XLII

COMPOSED BY THE SEA-SIDE, NEAR CALAIS

AUGUST, 1802

FAIR Star of evening, Splendour of the west,
Star of my Country !—on the horizon's brink
Thou hangest, stooping, as might seem, to sink
On England's bosom ; yet well pleased to rest,
Meanwhile, and be to her a glorious crest
Conspicuous to the Nations. Thou, I think,
Should'st be my Country's emblem ; and should'st wink,
Bright Star ! with laughter on her banners, drest
In thy fresh beauty. There ! that dusky spot
Beneath thee, that is England ; there she lies.

Blessings be on you both ! one hope, one lot,
One life, one glory !—I, with many a fear
For my dear Country, many heartfelt sighs,
Among men who do not love her, linger here.

XLIII

MUTABILITY

From low to high doth dissolution climb,
And sink from high to low, along a scale
Of awful notes, whose concord shall not fail;
A musical but melancholy chime,
Which they can hear who meddle not with crime,
Nor avarice, nor over-anxious care.
Truth fails not; but her outward forms that bear
The longest date do melt like frosty rime,
That in the morning whitened hill and plain
And is no more; drop like the tower sublime
Of yesterday, which royally did wear
His crown of weeds, but could not even sustain
Some casual shout that broke the silent air,
Or the unimaginable touch of Time.

1821.

XLIV

Hail, Twilight, sovereign of one peaceful hour !
Not dull art Thou as undiscerning Night;
But studious only to remove from sight
Day's mutable distinctions.—Ancient Power !

Thus did the waters gleam, the mountains lower,
To the rude Briton, when, in wolf-skin vest
Here roving wild, he laid him down to rest
On the bare rock, or through a leafy bower
Looked ere his eyes were closed. By him was seen
The self-same Vision which we now behold,
At thy meek bidding, shadowy Power! brought forth;
These mighty barriers, and the gulf between;
The flood, the stars,—a spectacle as old
As the beginning of the heavens and earth!

Between 1810–1815.

XLV

TO B. R. HAYDON

High is our calling, Friend!—Creative Art
(Whether the instrument of words she use,
Or pencil pregnant with ethereal hues,)
Demands the service of a mind and heart,
Though sensitive, yet, in their weakest part,
Heroically fashioned——to infuse
Faith in the whispers of the lonely Muse,
While the whole world seems adverse to desert.
And, oh! when Nature sinks, as oft she may,
Through long-lived pressure of obscure distress,
Still to be strenuous for the bright reward,
And in the soul admit of no decay,
Brook no continuance of weak-mindedness—
Great is the glory, for the strife is hard!

1815.

XLVI

SEPTEMBER, 1802. NEAR DOVER

Inland, within a hollow vale, I stood ;
And saw, while sea was calm and air was clear,
The coast of France—the coast of France how near !
Drawn almost into frightful neighbourhood.
I shrunk ; for verily the barrier flood
Was like a lake, or river bright and fair,
A span of waters ; yet what power is there !
What mightiness for evil and for good !
Even so doth God protect us if we be
Virtuous and wise. Winds blow, and waters roll,
Strength to the brave, and Power, and Deity ;
Yet in themselves are nothing ! One decree
Spake laws to *them*, and said that by the soul
Only, the Nations shall be great and free.

XLVII

I thought of Thee, my partner and my guide,
As being past away.—Vain sympathies !
For, backward, Duddon ! as I cast my eyes,
I see what was, and is, and will abide ;
Still glides the Stream, and shall for ever glide ;
The Form remains, the Function never dies ;
While we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
We Men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish ;—be it so !
Enough, if something from our hands have power

To live, and act, and serve the future hour ;
And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,
Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower,
We feel that we are greater than we know.

1820.

XLVIII

It is not to be thought of that the Flood
Of British freedom, which, to the open sea
Of the world's praise, from dark antiquity
Hath flowed, "with pomp of waters, unwithstood,"
Roused though it be full often to a mood
Which spurns the check of salutary bands,
That this most famous Stream in bogs and sands
Should perish ; and to evil and to good
Be lost for ever. In our halls is hung
Armoury of the invincible Knights of old :
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakspeare spake ; the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held.—In every thing we are sprung
Of Earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

1802.

XLIX

LONDON, 1802

Milton ! thou should'st be living at this hour :
England hath need of thee : she is a fen
Of stagnant waters : altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,

Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men ;
Oh ! raise us up, return to us again ;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart :
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea :
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness ; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

L

STEAMBOATS, VIADUCTS, AND RAILWAYS

Motions and Means, on land and sea at war
With old poetic feeling, not for this,
Shall ye, by Poets even, be judged amiss !
Nor shall your presence, howsoe'er it mar
The loveliness of Nature, prove a bar
To the Mind's gaining that prophetic sense
Of future change, that point of vision, whence
May be discovered what in soul ye are.
In spite of all that beauty may disown
In your harsh features, Nature doth embrace
Her lawful offspring in Man's art ; and Time,
Pleased with your triumphs o'er his brother Space,
Accepts from your bold hands the proffered crown
Of hope, and smiles on you with cheer sublime.

1833.

LI

ON THE EXTINCTION OF THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC

Once did She hold the gorgeous east in fee;
And was the safeguard of the west: the worth
Of Venice did not fall below her birth,
Venice, the eldest Child of Liberty.
She was a maiden City, bright and free;
No guile seduced, no force could violate;
And, when she took unto herself a Mate,
She must espouse the everlasting Sea.
And what if she had seen those glories fade,
Those titles vanish, and that strength decay;
Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid
When her long life hath reached its final day:
Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade
Of that which once was great, is passed away.

1802.

LII

Return, Content! for fondly I pursued,
Even when a child, the Streams—unheard, unseen;
Through tangled woods, impending rocks between;
Or, free as air, with flying inquest viewed
The sullen reservoirs whence their bold brood—
Pure as the morning, fretful, boisterous, keen,
Green as the salt-sea billows, white and green—
Poured down the hills, a choral multitude!

Nor have I tracked their course for scanty gains ;
They taught me random cares and truant joys,
That shield from mischief and preserve from stains
Vague minds, while men are growing out of boys ;
Maturer Fancy owes to their rough noise
Impetuous thoughts that brook not servile reins.

1820.

LIII

INSIDE OF KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL, CAMBRIDGE

Tax not the royal Saint with vain expense,
With ill-matched aims the Architect who planned—
Albeit labouring for a scanty band
Of white-robed Scholars only—this immense
And glorious Work of fine intelligence !
Give all thou canst ; high Heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely-calculated less or more ;
So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense
These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof
Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells,
Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
Lingering—and wandering on as loth to die ;
Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
That they were born for immortality.

THE SAME

What awful pérspective ! while from our sight
With gradual stealth the lateral windows hide

Their Portraitures, their stone-work glimmers, dyed
In the soft chequerings of a sleepy light.
Martyr, or King, or sainted Eremite,
Whoe'er ye be, that thus, yourselves unseen,
Imbue your prison-bars with solemn sheen,
Shine on, until ye fade with coming Night !—
But, from the arms of silence—list ! O list !
The music bursteth into second life ;
The notes luxuriate, every stone is kissed
By sound, or ghost of sound, in mazy strife ;
Heart-thrilling strains, that cast, before the eye
Of the devout, a veil of ecstasy !

CONTINUED

They dreamt not of a perishable home
Who thus could build. Be mine, in hours of fear
Or grovelling thought, to seek a refuge here ;
Or through the aisles of Westminster to roam ;
Where bubbles burst, and folly's dancing foam
Melts, if it cross the threshold ; where the wreath
Of awe-struck wisdom droops : or let my path
Lead to that younger Pile, whose sky-like dome
Hath typified by reach of daring art
Infinity's embrace ; whose guardian crest,
The silent Cross, among the stars shall spread
As now, when She hath also seen her breast
Filled with mementos, satiate with its part
Of grateful England's overflowing Dead.

1821.

LIV

TO THE MEN OF KENT

October, 1803

Vanguard of Liberty, ye men of Kent,
Ye children of a Soil that doth advance
Her haughty brow against the coast of France,
Now is the time to prove your hardiment!
To France be words of invitation sent!
They from their fields can see the countenance
Of your fierce war, may ken the glittering lance
And hear you shouting forth your brave intent.
Left single, in bold parley, ye, of yore,
Did from the Norman win a gallant wreath;
Confirmed the charters that were yours before;—
No parleying now! In Britain is one breath;
We all are with you now from shore to shore:—
Ye men of Kent, 'tis victory or death!

LV

ON THE DEATH OF HIS MAJESTY (GEORGE THE THIRD)

Ward of the Law!—dread Shadow of a King!
Whose realm had dwindled to one stately room;
Whose universe was gloom immersed in gloom,
Darkness as thick as life o'er life could fling,
Save haply for some feeble glimmering
Of Faith and Hope—if thou, by nature's doom,
Gently hast sunk into the quiet tomb,

Why should we bend in grief, to sorrow cling,
When thankfulness were best?—Fresh-flowing tears,
Or, where tears flow not, sigh succeeding sigh,
Yield to such after-thought the sole reply
Which justly it can claim. The Nation hears
In this deep knell, silent for threescore years,
An unexampled voice of awful memory!

1820.

LVI

WHERE lies the Land to which yon Ship must go?
Fresh as a lark mounting at break of day,
Festively she puts forth in trim array;
Is she for tropic suns, or polar snow?
What boots the inquiry?—Neither friend nor foe
She cares for; let her travel where she may,
She finds familiar names, a beaten way
Ever before her, and a wind to blow.
Yet still I ask, what haven is her mark?
And, almost as it was when ships were rare,
(From time to time, like Pilgrims, here and there
Crossing the waters) doubt, and something dark,
Of the old Sea some reverential fear,
Is with me at thy farewell, joyous Bark!

1806.

NOTES

The footnotes in the text are Wordsworth's own.

PART I

I. *Cyclops.* In ancient Greek mythology a cyclops was a one-eyed giant.

III. *Celandine.* Ranunculus Ficaria, a yellow field-flower akin to the buttercup. Greek, χελιδόνιον, "the swallow-flower."

VII. *Emmeline.* The poet's favourite sister, Dorothy Wordsworth, is really in mind.

X. Poems X., XI., XII., XV., XVI., XVII., XVIII., XIX., XX., and XXI., are from *Lyrical Ballads.*

XIII. The child was the poet's daughter, Catharine Wordsworth; she died in the next year, 1812.

XIV. The two men described here are Wordsworth and Coleridge. The third stanza describes the effect of poetical composition upon Wordsworth. Wordsworth's sister and Coleridge's son have borne testimony to the truth of the impression which the poem conveys.

XV. *Winander.* Windermere. This poem was afterwards incorporated in *The Prelude*, Bk. V. l. 364.

XXII. The scene of *The Excursion* is laid in the Lakes. An aged dalesman has been lost in the mountains.

PART II

Poems XXIV., XXV., XXVIII., and XXIX., are from *Lyrical Ballads.*

XXV. *The Idiot Boy* met with more scorn than most of Wordsworth's poems. It is perhaps the truest test of Wordsworthian

enthusiasm. It is certainly characteristic and illustrative of its author's views. In an interesting letter, written in 1800, Wordsworth defends himself against the criticisms of a correspondent, Mr. John Wilson. Amongst other things he says, "I have often applied to idiots that sublime expression of scripture, that *their life is hidden with God.*" Speaking also of a suggestion that he should add a stanza in reference to a particular point, he says, "the narrative in the poem is so rapid and impassioned, that I could not find a place to insert the stanza without checking the progress of it." The whole letter (which is in Mr. Nowell Smith's book) is well worth reading. The quotation from scripture may be found in Colossians iii. 3.

XXVI. *Peter Bell* was written as a set-off to Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*.

XXVII. *Chatterton, the marvellous boy*. Thomas Chatterton was born in 1752; he killed himself in 1770. His poetical genius was extraordinary; he first came into prominence by inventing a great number of poems which he claimed to have found in medieval manuscripts; he endeavoured to engage in a literary career in London, but was unsuccessful, and too proud to face his failure.

Of Him who walked in glory and in pride. Robert Burns, the poet, 1759–1796.

XXVIII. This poem was intended to be one of a series of Cumberland Pastorals.

Calenture. This is a kind of delirium, sometimes caused, especially in the tropics, by exposure to excessive heat, particularly on board ship. The source of Wordsworth's lines has not been identified among Gilbert's printed works. There is a similar description in Cowper's *Task*, about the middle of Book I., and another in *The South Sea*, by Swift.

XXIX. It is said that the remains of the sheep-fold, which is the subject of this poem, may still be seen (1909).

And never lifted up a single stone. Matthew Arnold quotes this line as one by which we may seize from Wordsworth "his true and most characteristic form of expression."

XXXI. This poem, in a classic style somewhat surprising in Wordsworth, seems to be due to his having re-read the *Æneid*, when he was teaching his son John. Laodamia was wife of Protesilaos, the first of the Greeks to land on the shore before Troy. After his death Laodamia was allowed to see him for three hours; at the

conclusion of this period she expired. The reference to Vergil is from *Æneid*, iv. 447. Up to 1820, the last stanza but one appeared in the following form, perhaps a preferable one :—

> "Ah, judge her gently who so deeply loved !
> Her, who in reason's spite, yet without crime,
> Was in a trance of passion thus removed ;
> Delivered from the galling yoke of time
> And these frail elements—to gather flowers
> Of blissful quiet 'mid unfading bowers."

Mild Hermes spake. Hermes and Mercury stand for the same divinity.

Parcæ. The Fates.

Erebus. A son of Chaos, and a personification of darkness.

Alcestis. Wife of Admetus, who endured to die in his stead. She was brought back from Hades by Hercules.

Æson. The father-in-law of Medea, who rejuvenated him by magic.

PART III

XXXII. This poem, written the year after Trafalgar, has Nelson constantly in mind.

XXXIII. *Peele Castle* is near Barrow-in-Furness.

A deep distress hath humanised my Soul. This alludes to the poet's brother, John Wordsworth, who perished by shipwreck, when in command of the East India Company's ship, the *Earl of Abergavenny*, February 6, 1805.

XXXIV. This poem was afterwards incorporated in *The Prelude*, Book I.

XXXV. *Ere we had been ten days Sojourners in my father's house, he died.* The poet's father, John Wordsworth, died at Cockermouth, in 1783. Wordsworth was then at school at Hawkshead.

XXXVI. Of *The Recluse*, which was to complete a trilogy of great poems with *The Prelude* and *The Excursion*, Wordsworth wrote about one book, first published in 1888. It is not found in Moxon's or the Clarendon Press editions. The extract given here, however, was published in 1814, as part of the Preface to *The Excursion*, being, as Wordsworth said, "a kind of Prospectus of the design and scope of the whole poem." The influence of Milton is clear in

this passage. See the opening of *Paradise Lost*, Bk. VII. *Descend, prophetic spirit! that inspir'st the human soul.*

> "Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
> Of the wide world dreaming on things to come."
> *Shakspere*, Sonnet 107.

XXXVII. This piece appeared in *Lyrical Ballads*. The sister is Dorothy Wordsworth.

PART IV

XXXVIII. It is to be remembered that Wordsworth denied that he meant to imply a former bodily existence of the soul in this poem.

XXXIX. Wordsworth modelled this Ode on Gray's *Hymn to Adversity*, beginning "Daughter of Jove, relentless power."

XL. Poems XL., XLI., XLIV., XLV., LV., LVI., are from *Miscellaneous Sonnets*, 1827.

Poems XLII., XLVI., XLVIII., XLIX., LI., LIV., are from *Sonnets dedicated to National Independence and Liberty*.

Poems XLIII., LIII., are from *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*.

Poems XLVII., LII., are from the *River Duddon*.

Poem L. is from *Itinerary Poems of* 1833.

XLI. The real date of composition is known from Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal.

XLII. This and some other sonnets are concerned with the position of England in regard to the threatened invasion by Napoleon.

XLV. Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786–1846) was a historical painter of some note. His "Judgment of Solomon" is in the National Gallery. Keats addressed several poems to him, and refers to him in the following lines :—

> "My pictures are Salvator's, save a few
> Of Titian's portraiture, and one, though new,
> Of Haydon's in its fresh magnificence."

He was one of the first to appreciate the Elgin marbles, when they were brought to England. Wordsworth and Keats met each other at Haydon's House, December, 1817.

XLVII. Duddon is a small river on the borders of Cumberland and Lancashire.

LI. The Republic of Venice was at its height in the 15th century. It then had extensive possessions in Greece, Dalmatia, and the Levant, and carried on practically all the trade of the Eastern Mediterranean.

LIII. *The royal Saint.* Henry VI., who founded King's College, Cambridge, and Eton College. The chapel of King's College, one of the chief examples of late Gothic architecture, is of great size, and was begun by the founder in 1446. The progress of the building was greatly retarded, but Henry VII. carried it on energetically, and it was completed under Henry VIII. in 1515.

They dreamt not of a perishable home who thus could build. This estimate of the spirit of the Gothic builders is a notable anticipation of one of Ruskin's main contentions.

LIV. *Did from the Norman win a gallant wreath.* This confirmation of Kentish charters by the Conqueror is probably a fable.

LV. King George III. died on January 29, 1820; he had been permanently insane since 1811.

INDEX OF FIRST LINES

	PAGE
A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by	195
All by the moonlight river side	102
All night the storm endured ; and, soon as help	80
A slumber did my spirit seal	66
Behold her, single in the field	64
Behold, within the leafy shade	63
Earth has not anything to show more fair	195
Ethereal minstrel ! pilgrim of the sky !	60
Fair Star of evening, Splendour of the west	196
Five years have past ; five summers, with the length	178
From low to high doth dissolution climb	197
Hail, Twilight, sovereign of one peaceful hour !	197
Hast thou seen, with flash incessant	83
High is our calling, Friend !—Creative Art	198
If from the public way you turn your steps	127
If Nature, for a favourite child	79
I heard a thousand blended notes	76
Inland, within a hollow vale, I stood	199
I thought of Thee, my partner and my guide	199
It is not to be thought of that the Flood	200
It is the first mild day of March	77
I wandered lonely as a cloud	57
I was thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile !	162
Loving she is, and tractable, though wild	68
Mark how the feathered tenants of the flood	61
Milton ! thou should'st be living at this hour	200
Motions and Means, on land and sea at war	201
O blithe New-comer ! I have heard	59
Oft I had heard of Lucy Gray	84

PAGE
Once did She hold the gorgeous east in fee 202
On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life 175
O Soul of Nature! excellent and fair! 167
Return, Content! for fondly I pursued 202
Stay near me—do not take thy flight! 62
Stern Daughter of the Voice of God 193
Strange fits of passion have I known 67
Tax not the royal Saint with vain expense 203
—The little hedgerow birds 73
There is a flower, the lesser Celandine 58
There was a boy; ye knew him well, ye cliffs 72
There was a roaring in the wind all night 106
There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream 185
"These grassy heaps lie amicably close" 143
These tourists, heaven preserve us! needs must live 112
They dreamt not of a perishable home 204
Three years she grew in sun and shower 65
'Tis eight o'clock,—a clear March night 86
Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books 75
Vanguard of Liberty, ye men of Kent 205
Ward of the Law!—dread Shadow of a King! 205
What awful pérspective! while from our sight 203
Where lies the Land to which yon Ship must go? 206
Who is the happy Warrior? Who is he 159
Why, William, on that old grey stone 74
Wisdom and Spirit of the universe! 164
Within our happy Castle there dwelt One 69
With little here to do or see 55
With sacrifice before the rising morn 152

INDEX OF TITLES

PAGE

Animal Tranquillity and Decay 73
Brothers, The 112
Butterfly, To a 62
Calais, Sonnet composed by the sea-side near 196
Castle of Indolence, Stanzas written in my pocket-copy of Thomson's 69
Celandine, the Small 58
Characteristics of a Child Three Years Old 68
Churchyard among the Mountains, The 143
Cuckoo, To the. 59
Daisy, To the 55
Description of a Grand Spectacle upon the Mountains . . . 80
Duty, Ode to 193
Elegiac Stanzas ("I was thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile!") 162
Excursion, The, Bk. II. l. 805 80
„ „ Bk. VII. l. 31 143
Expostulation and Reply 74
George the Third, On the Death of (Sonnet) 205
Happy Warrior, Character of 159
Haydon, B. R., Sonnet to 198
Idiot Boy, The 86
Imagination and Taste, how impaired and restored 167
Influence of Natural Objects in calling forth, etc. 164
Intimations of Immortality, Ode on 185
Kent, To the Men of (Sonnet) 205
King's College Chapel, Inside of (Sonnets) 203
Laodamia 152
Lines written in Early Spring ("I heard a thousand blended notes") 76

PAGE

London, 1802 (Sonnet) 200
Lucy Gray 84
Matthew 79
Michael 127
Mutability (Sonnet) 197
Peele Castle, Elegiac Stanzas suggested by a picture of . . . 162
Peter Bell (an extract) 102
Prelude, The, Bk. I. l. 401 164
„ „ Bk. V. l. 364 72
„ „ Bk. XII. l. 93 167
Recluse, The (extract) 175
Resolution and Independence 106
Sea-side, near Calais, Sonnet composed by the 196
September, 1802 (Sonnet) 199
Sister, To my ("It is the first mild day of March") 77
Skylark, To a 60
Sleep, To (Sonnet) 195
Solitary Reaper, The 64
Sparrow's Nest, The 63
Steamboats, Viaducts, and Railways (Sonnet) 201
Tables Turned, The 75
There was a Boy 72
Thomson's Castle of Indolence, Stanzas written in my pocket-copy of 69
Tintern Abbey, Lines composed a few miles above 178
Venetian Republic, On the Extinction of (Sonnet) 202
Water-fowl 61
Westminster Bridge, Sonnet composed upon 195

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES.

S0-GBJ-132